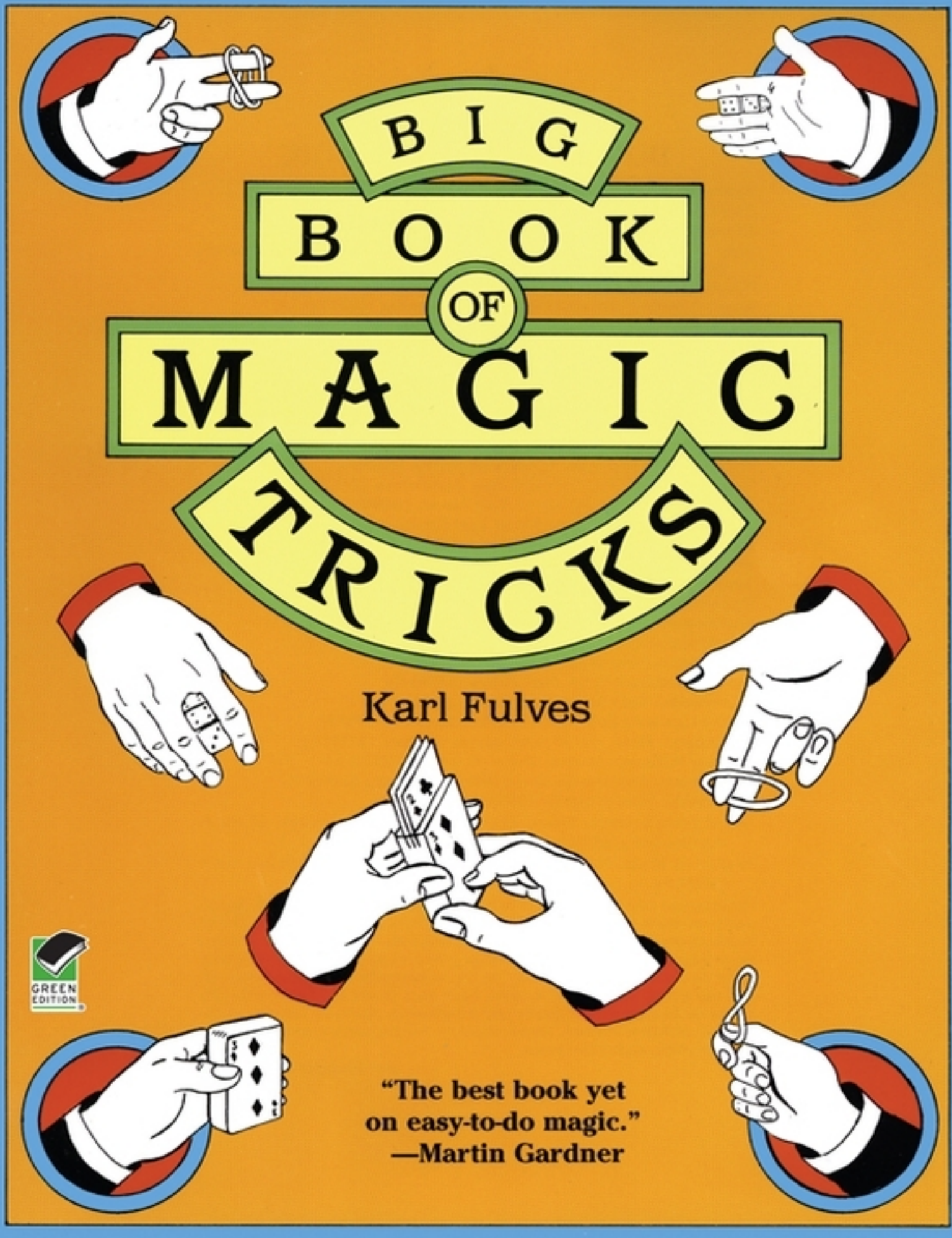
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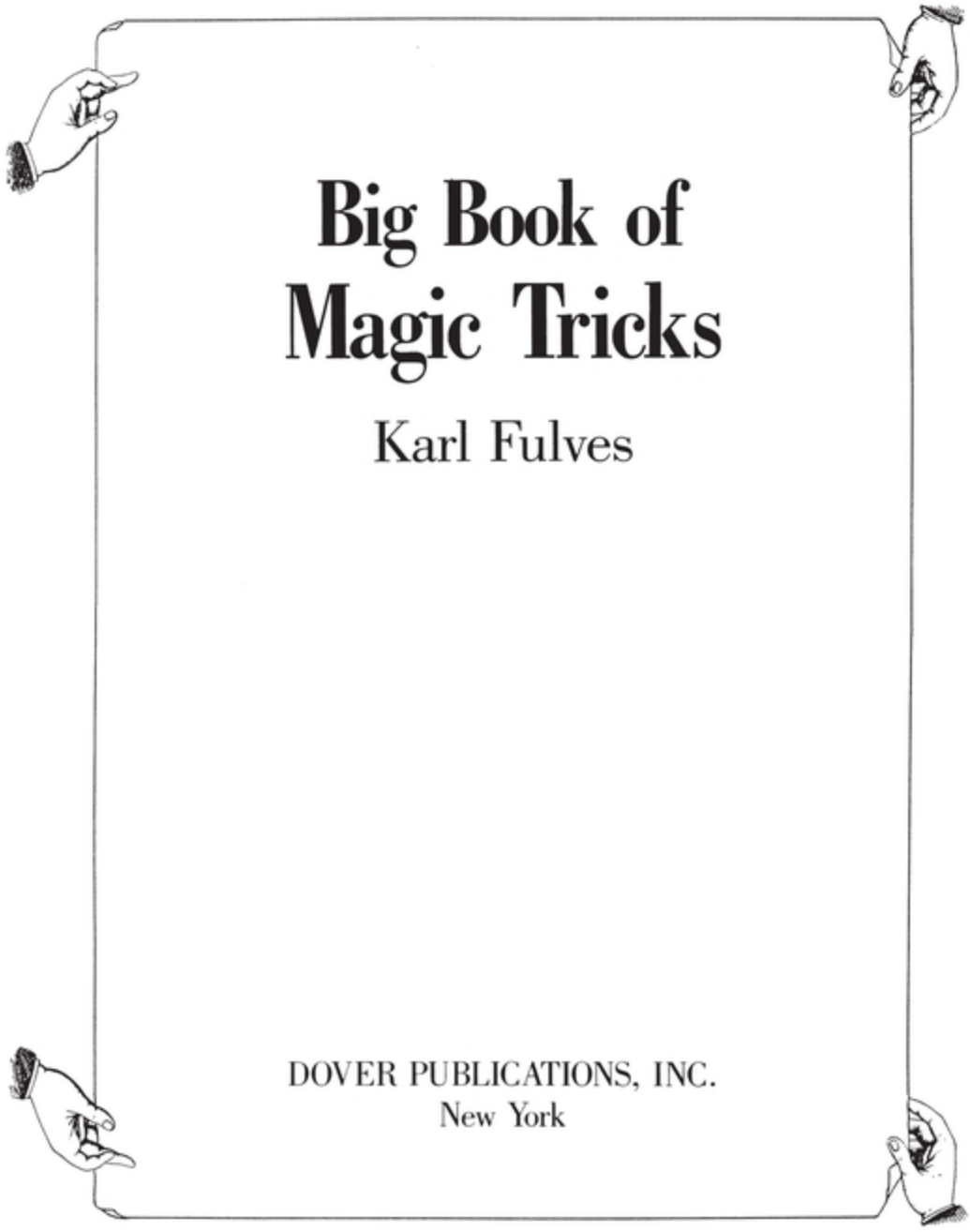
OF
MAGIC
TRICKS
Karl Fulves
GREEN EDITION
"The best book yet
on easy-to-do magic."
—Martin Gardner



Big Book of Magic Tricks

Karl Fulves

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To Don Nielsen,
a friend for many years
and one of the true creative minds in magic

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Preface

To say it straight out, this book deals with the art of deception. There is deception in government and politics and diplomacy, but magic is the art of harmless deception. The principles are the same and include everything from misdirection to mind conditioning, but the goal of magic is to entertain, and that does seem to make it profoundly different from other forms of deception.

In choosing the “how-to” material for this book, I wanted to include effects, routines, swindles, and stunts that required little or nothing in the way of apparatus, special props, sleight of hand, or elaborate preparation. Most of the routines are easy to do, yet produce a strong response in spectators when properly presented.

Each chapter represents some of the best non-sleight magic of its kind. There are tricks with cards, coins, rope, and mind reading, as well as tricks with string, dollar bills, ordinary drinking glasses, matches, and even paper clips. There are spectacular tricks like “Predicting the Super Bowl” and “How to Deal a Royal Flush,” as well as subtle proposition bets that take you behind the scenes of the gambler’s craft and explain why you can’t win.

The art of deception, the real secret of magic, lies in fooling the mind. As S. Leo Horowitz pointed out: “The truth is that it’s quite incorrect to state that magic is deception by means of the hands. Magic is deception by means of the mind. The hands come in as accessories after the fact.”

Acknowledgements

The Hilliard quote that opens chapter one of this book is taken from his monumental thousand-page tome *Greater Magic.* The Hilliard book, Evans's *The Old and the New Magic*, Christopher's *Panorama of Magic*, and a number of standard reference works were used in the construction of the first chapter. It should be emphasized that many questions about the evolution of magic remain unanswered. It is not the purpose of this book to settle all of the historic puzzles, from Egyptian wall paintings to the true nature of Pinetti's rivalry with Torrini, but merely to relate, in somewhat condensed form, what appear to be the best-known facts in these areas.

Allan Slaight originally suggested the tie-in between "Build Down" and the follow-up gambling routine "The Ten-Card Deal." The version of the deal described in chapter nine was based on a stratagem devised by Daniel Dobson.

A trick similar to Scarne's "Card Through Glass" in chapter ten was developed by Bob Hummer and appeared in print some years ago.

Some tricks in this book appear without credit to particular magicians. In most cases it is because the basic effects and methods are known, but their authors are unknown. In some cases the routines are my own; my name does not appear because I could find no good reason to parade my own name through the pages of this book.

The most difficult items to trace were bets and techniques that are associated with gambling. The perimeter of secrecy that surrounds magic is as nothing compared to the private fraternity of professional gamblers who shun publicity of any kind. Thus, although a particular bet or gambling hustle may be known, its author is almost always permanently unknown.

For their assistance in the preparation of this book I would like to thank Sam Schwartz, Martin Gardner, and Joseph K. Schmidt. Richard McDonough was most generous in allowing me complete freedom in choosing the structure and content of this book.

— KARL FULVES

1

The Art of the Impossible

> In the Beginning, there was magic in the world. There was the magic of day and night, of wind and clouds and of the tides, which were alive and moved at the thunderbidding of unknown gods.
>
> And there was the magic of birth and of life and the disturbing, impenetrable magic of death.
>
> And to the first people, who had come down out of primeval trees to crouch in caves against long nights of fear, everything was magic. Some of it was white magic and good, but mostly it was black magic and bad.
>
> And so they called upon their priests and wizards, who wrought magic charms and incantations against the terrors of death and darkness, thunder and lightning, blood and destruction, and fabricated rude talismans and amulets to placate the unknown gods. . . . That was in the Beginning.
>
> — JOHN NORTHERN HILLIARD

Magic probably began in the time of primitive cave dwellers. Magicians claimed the power of the supernatural — power to control the darkness and the unseen spirits that inhabited the night. Magicians stood between cave dwellers and primitive man’s fear of the unknown, and because of this, praises were sung to the early magicians, and privileges granted to them.

The earliest written record of a magical performance is found in the Westcar papyrus and tells of the feats of the magician Dedi before the Egyptian king Cheops. The performance was probably given about five thousand years ago. In the intervening centuries, soothsayers and prophets abounded, mystics plied their trade, miracle workers continued to claim their control over the forces of good and evil. There was little knowledge in the world in those times, and hence much superstition and fear. Witches and demons flourished, to be confronted only by those who held the secrets of proper spells, amulets, charms, and mumbo jumbo.

There were priests in ancient times who exorcised demons, told fortunes, worked miracles, consulted oracles. There were magicians who caused the crops to grow and the rain to fall; magicians who understood the changes of the moon; magicians who delved deeply into the study of tides, the shifting patterns of stars; scryers, sorcerers, charlatans parading through the centuries to answer the needs of those who wanted a glimpse into the unknown.

The Sumero-Akkadians used the word *imga* for priest. The Assyrians later changed the word to *maga;* their high priest was *Rab-mag.* The Persian word, and the Latin word *magus,* probably came from the Chaldean, and from the Persians came the words for the priests and oracles of the Greeks and Romans.

The written history of magic now picks up with Biblical literature. We read where God sent Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh to vie with Egyptian magicians for superiority. Another trace is found in the story of Joseph who interpreted the Egyptian king’s dreams and foretold Egypt’s seven years of famine.

Magic continued to grow. The thaumaturgist of ancient times passed on his secret knowledge to the mahatmas of Tibet, the priests of Bel, the yogis of India, the Taoists of China, the druids and marabouts, the priests of fire and thunder, the mystics of Babylon and Arabia. Religion and magic were intertwined, the one seemingly inseparable from the other. In the third century A.D. a fresco depicted Christ performing the miracle of the resurrection of Lazarus — the scriptures in one hand, a magic wand in the other.

The procession moved into the Dark Ages with the appearance of astrologers and alchemists, cabalists and Rosicrucians, but the nature of magic was changing. In the beginning it was assumed that celestial powers and supernatural forces were rational in some way not completely understood. To this view was applied the term *animism,* a prescientific concept that imputed to nature a spiritual life somewhat analogous to human behavior; hence the human form of gods and the human characteristics assigned to constellations, to the forces of nature, to the shape and motivation of demons, ghosts, ogres, and gnomes.

The old magic hoped to transcend human ignorance by the brute application of supernatural force. The miracle worker thus stood as the vanguard against Satan and evil powers. By means of charms and talismans, incantations and prayers, the magician sought to turn back evil and at the same time control the forces of nature for the benefit of humankind. But science was growing, bringing new knowledge to dispel the darkness, and in time science became the rival of Black Magic for the attention of the masses. Science and the supernatural peered uneasily at one another across the gulf that spanned the Dark Ages. It was the time of Simon Magnus and Agrippa, Nostradamus and Merlin, Friar Bacon, Dr. Dee, and the ultimate last vestige of the old magic — the prince of thieves, the master charlatan, the Count di Cagliostro.

As Black Magic retreated, a new kind of magic began to develop. It was a magic which pretended only a tenuous connection to the supernatural — a magic that exploited little understood discoveries of an infant science that gave it the secrets of optics, acoustics and mechanics, the early theories of physics and chemistry. In his Memoirs, Benvenuto Cellini recorded a meeting with a magician of this new school, writing of the marvels he conjured from “smoke and shadows,” of the fear and wonder evoked by the necromancer’s powers.

Priests and charlatans continued to prey on the weakness and fear of believers, but their numbers dwindled as they found themselves displaced by jugglers and hanky-panky men — strolling gypsies who exhibited their tricks at fairs and in the marketplace, at the castles of noblemen, and in the crowded city streets of commoners. They were tricksters and swindlers — fortunetellers, clairvoyants and swamis, prestidigitators who clung to the ways of the old magic while adopting the means of the new. Playing cards

had already been invented, and by the middle of the fifteenth century engraved cards were popular merchandise at fairgrounds. The three-shell game and its sophisticated offspring the cups and balls were popular tricks of mountebanks and thimbleriggers. Fakers, crystal gazers, mahatmas, mentalists, and conjurers would entertain for a small fee.

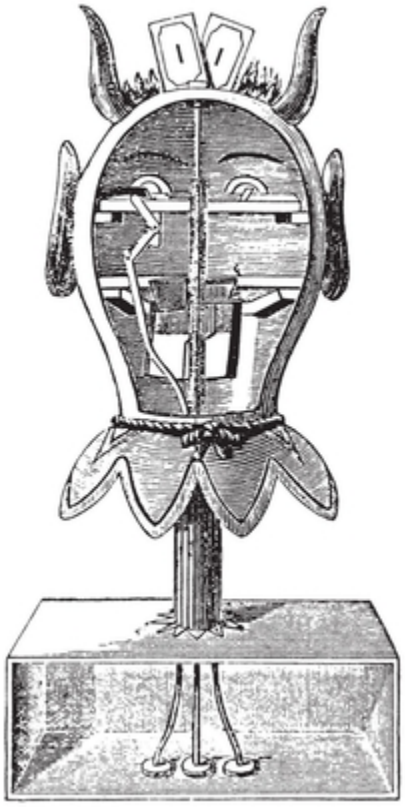
It was a time of change, a time when new magical effects and methods had to be developed to keep pace with the marvels of science and invention. The seed planted by Isaac Newton and other gifted theoreticians of the new science had, by the beginning of the eighteenth century, blossomed and grown into a colossus that threatened to displace other gods. The incantations, charms, and other trappings of the supernatural were no longer suitable to the times. Natural magic was shorn of charlatanism, and in its place rose magicians and illusionists:Comus, Breslaw, Torrini, and the first eminent practitioner of the new magic — the chevalier Pinetti.

Just as earlier magicians could not entirely free themselves from the mumbo jumbo associated with primitive forms of their art, so too could

Pinetti not resist claiming that he was endowed with preternatural powers. In an earlier century, intending to combat a witch-hunting mania that had swept England, Sir Reginald Scott had published a book, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584), to explain that the feats of witches and magicians were not the result of pacts signed with the Devil but rather feats which had ordinary, everyday explanations. In the same way, when Pinetti made claim to supernatural powers in his book *Amusements Physiques* (1784), he was quickly challenged by Henri Decremps, an accomplished and perceptive observer of the art of magic, in a publication entitled *La Magie blanche dévoilée.* Decremps followed his first book with a second, published a year later, exposing all of Pinetti's new tricks. Pinetti, gifted at the art of chicanery, countered the Decremps expose by inventing new tricks and illusions.

Pinetti's feats were later exposed by a professor of physics in Berlin named Kossman, but it appears that Pinetti was ultimately brought down by a rival magician and he moved to Russia. In the meantime he established himself as a distinguished inventor and showman — a master of publicity and an expert magician — and it was he who opened the door to those who would follow: Bosco, Comte, Herrmann, Dobler, Heller, Hartz, and the two great figures of nineteenth-century magic — Hofzinser and Robert-Houdin.

The burgeoning Industrial Revolution brought with it a vastly increased interest on the part of the public in clever machines. Magicians astounded the public with machines that no scientist could produce, machines that combined intricate mechanisms with mysterious properties. These machines could communicate directly with humans, predict the future, or commune with the spirit world. An astonishing automaton, designed by von Kempelen in 1769, was a clockwork chess player called "The Turk." This sensational device took on all challengers at chess and seldom lost a game. It was the subject of terrific publicity and controversy for more than fifty years. Among the famous names of the day who played and lost to The Turk was Benjamin Franklin.



Magic had spread to the American colonies almost from the time of their establishment. As early as 1612, a town in Virginia put forth the decree that conjurors and “other idle persons” be barred. The Salem witch-hunts were unfortunately characteristic of the atmosphere that pervaded the colonies during the early years, but by the time of the American Revolution magicians were able to practice their calling in the New World.

The ranks of the great and near-great on both sides of the Atlantic swelled. The craftsmen who now dominated the stage were Alexander Herrmann, Maskelyne, Kellar, Thurston, de Kolta, Ching Ling Foo, Valadon, Imro Fox, Carl Hertz, the incomparable Houdini, J. Warren Keane, Hardin, Devant, the Zanzigs, Trewery.

But magic was changing again. Tricks were streamlined and the pace quickened. Tons of apparatus necessary to early stage acts were discarded in favor of tricks dependent on little or no apparatus. Magicians no longer found it necessary to cloak each trick in mysterious patter. Free from the bonds of the past, able to exploit new sleights, new techniques, new approaches, magic moved from the vaudeville stage to the nightclub floor.

The undoubted giants of this period, who reigned unchallenged for decades, were Cardini, Dunninger, and Scarne. Each was the master of his own specialty, and each remains unexcelled to this day.

Magic continues to grow. What used to be called “street conjuring” or “drawing-room magic” has developed into the highly sophisticated art of contemporary closeup magic. Because the spectators literally surround the magician during the closeup act, it is probably accurate to say that closeup magic has a quality of immediacy and impact that cannot be obtained by stage magic. The great master in this field is Tony Slydini, and it is his theories that have influenced the generation just coming to maturity in the closeup field. So, in a sense, magic is beginning — exciting challenges lie ahead, and the panorama of a vast new era in magic is beginning to unfold.

Magic and Its Professors

The history of magic is in a sense a history of what people are willing to believe. It seems logical to deduce from this the observation that the success or failure of a magician in a particular era tells us as much about the era as it does about the magician. A vivid example is found in the life of Joseph Balsamo, the infamous charlatan later known as Cagliostro.

He came to fame in the late eighteenth century, a strange time in the annals of history — a time with a curious mix of skepticism and credulity, of romance and intrigue. In France, where Cagliostro practiced his peculiar system of magic and mysticism, the old culture was slowly giving way. The atmosphere was an uneasy one of materialism and superstition, and those who exploited French society would later find themselves consumed in its ultimate destruction by the French Revolution.

Of Cagliostro, Greeven wrote in the *Calcutta Review:*

> It is not enough to say that Cagliostro posed as a magician, or stood forth as the apostle of a mystic religion. . . . Cagliostro impressed himself deeply on the history of his time. He flashed on the world like a meteor. He carried it by storm.

Princes and nobles thronged to his “magic operations.” His horses and his coaches and his liveries rivaled a kings’ in magnificence. He was offered, and refused, a ducal throne. No less illustrious a writer than the Empress of Russia deemed him a worthy subject of her plays. Goethe made him the hero of a famous drama. A French Cardinal and an English Lord were his bosom companions. In an age which arrogated to itself the title of the philosophic, the charm of his eloquence drew thousands to his lodges, in which he preached the mysteries of his Egyptian ritual, as revealed to him by the Grand Kophta under the shadow of the pyramids.

Cagliostro’s career began with his arrival in London in 1776. It was there that he announced himself as a wonder-worker, capable of duplicating the alchemists’ art of transmuting base metals to gold and of knowing the ingredients of an Egyptian wine that would prolong life. He took an interest in rituals associated with Masonic lodges, and though bitterly repudiated by British members of the fraternity, Cagliostro attracted thousands of eager followers.

The meetings of the Egyptian Lodge presided over by Cagliostro were in reality seances in which standard magical effects were demonstrated under the guise of spiritualism. In these meetings Cagliostro practiced crystal gazing, and later, in a private laboratory in 1780, he demonstrated the transmutation of mercury to silver.

When he visited Strasbourg, Cagliostro was lavished with attention. Claiming the gift of miraculous cures, the ability to conjure gold from worthless metals, and the power to see the future, he was an instant celebrity. In her *Memoirs* the Baroness d’Oberkirch wrote:

> No one can ever form the faintest idea of the fervor with which everybody pursued Cagliostro. He was surrounded, besieged; everyone trying to win a glance or a word. A dozen ladies of rank and two actresses had followed him in order to continue their treatments. If I had not seen it, I should never have imagined that a Prince of the Roman Church, a man in other respects intelligent and honorable, could so far let himself be imposed upon as to renounce his dignity, his free will, at the bidding of a sharper.

Cagliostro's greatest fame (and the beginning of his ultimate downfall) came with his appearance in Paris in 1785. He was greeted as the latest sensation and no story of his prowess seemed too impossible to believe. The guest of royalty, he nevertheless proclaimed himself the chief of the Rosicrucians and thus a being elevated above the rest of mankind, nobles included. He gave a spirit seance at which the ghosts of six dead men were made to appear. News of this event attracted such sensational publicity that it reached the court of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette.

At the height of his fame he was arrested and thrown into the Bastille on a charge of complicity in the theft of a diamond necklace. After a long incarceration in the Bastille without trial, he was ultimately acquitted. The throngs that greeted him upon his release made it known that his imprisonment was probably due to corrupt officials surrounding the throne, and hinted that Marie Antoinette was herself probably guilty in the necklace swindle. The public's outrage at the practices of French royalty was but a hint of the revolutionary fervor that was to grow stronger and spread, culminating in the bloody thunder of the French Revolution.

After leaving prison, Cagliostro returned to London. But whereas he once reigned as a popular public figure, Cagliostro now found it difficult to gain attention or impress the public. The "ugly facts about the swindler's early career," said one newspaper of the time, were well known. The Freemasons repudiated him, and he soon became the object of continued and widespread ridicule. Deeply in debt, unable to attract an audience of the gullible, threatened with lawsuits, he fled to Rome.

It was a fatal choice. In 1789 he was arrested and jailed in the fortress of San Angelo on the charge of attempting to practice Freemasonry. Tried before the cowled inquisitors of the Holy Inquisition, he was found guilty and sentenced to a dungeon at the Castle of San Angelo. An attempted escape failed. Isolated and powerless, a pitiable figure, he was transferred to the Fortress of San Leon and locked away in a grim, underground, stone cell. He was never seen nor heard from again. It is said that Cagliostro died in August, 1795, but officially the exact date of his death is a blank — an ignoble end to a once notoriously powerful figure.

A contemporary of Cagliostro's, the chevalier Pinetti, represents an interesting contrast in style. Where Cagliostro deliberately cloaked himself in the ritual and dark secrets of the mystic, Pinetti combined drama and artistry in a theatrically entertaining performance of magic.

Pinetti was born in 1750 in Tuscany. A scholar and teacher of physics, he enlivened classroom demonstrations with experiments that provoked much comment. Encouraged by the attention shown him, and a showman by instinct, Pinetti was by 1783 giving performances at the court of Louis XVI to enthusiastic applause from the royal audience. The general public, awakened to the enchantment of inexplicable mysteries as performed by Cagliostro and Mesmer, were quick to proclaim Pinetti's magical abilities.

Among his demonstrations, or self-styled "inventions," was a gold head that became animated on command, a mechanical bird that fluttered its wings and whistled any melody called for by the audience, an automaton that answered questions propounded to it by the audience, and a bouquet that sprouted oranges. A ring, borrowed from a lady in the audience, was made to vanish at the shot of a gun. The ring was later found when Pinetti opened a small box to reveal a dove, which held the borrowed ring in its beak. The dove then returned the ring to its rightful owner.

A trick which caused much amazement and was considered one of the celebrated masterpieces of Pinetti's act was the trick called "The Stolen Shirt." At Pinetti's request, a spectator from the audience would step onto the stage and unbutton his shirt at the neck and cuffs. In a single quick movement, Pinetti then removed the shirt from the man's body. Although a confederate was suspected, surprisingly enough there was no confederate.

Impossible as it seems, the shirt was removed from an innocent spectator chosen at random who had no more idea how the trick was done than anyone else in the audience.

Pinetti exposed the shirt trick in a book published in the summer of 1784. This was in part a response to the Decremps expose mentioned earlier. The Decremps revelations led Pinetti to change his act. One of the new features, introduced during his London tour, was something called “Second Sight.” In this new mystery, Pinetti’s wife, blindfolded and seated on the stage, would read the minds of spectators in the audience by identifying objects they provided to the magician. Today this seems a straightforward enough trick, but in its time it was something of a novelty and attracted much attention.

Pinetti’s fame survived the many exposes of his act, but in time a rival, Torrini, overtook him in fame and popularity. Mortified that he was playing to near-empty houses while Torrini played to packed theatres, Pinetti closed his theatre and journeyed to Russia. Though Pinetti is reported to have made a fortune in Russia with his magic act, he lost most of his money by investing in the then-primitive craft of balloon ascension. Penniless and broken in spirit, he died at the turn of the century at age fifty.

It is well to observe that while some of Pinetti’s work smacked of mysticism and the occult, generally he presented tricks that avoided the intimidating overtones of Black Magic. Instead his tricks were designed to deceive the mind and to delight the eye. His influence on magic was widespread, and many aspiring conjurors tried to imitate his stage manner and presentation.

By all accounts, Jean Eugene Robert, later known as Robert-Houdin, is considered the father of modern magic. Though his performing career spanned little more than a decade, he was to have a profound effect on magicians who followed him.

Robert-Houdin was born in December, 1805, in Blois. Napoleon had just fought the battle of Austerlitz and was at the zenith of power as emperor of the French Empire. Houdin took up his father's trade as a watchmaker. By a happy accident, a book he had purchased at this time, which he thought to be a text on watchmaking, turned out to be a book on scientific amusements. The book, describing a large number of scientific curios and magical effects, wrought a great change in Houdin. He was bedazzled by the cleverness concealed in the workings of magical tricks, and saw immediately that he had a natural talent toward magic.

He was to remain a watchmaker until 1843, when the count de l'Escalopier visited his shop. The count's eye was attracted to mechanical toys in the window, but he was particularly taken with a clear crystal clock that ran apparently without watchworks. The clock (still obtainable, incidentally, in a variety of contemporary designs), the invention of Robert-Houdin, was sold to the count, who subsequently became a frequent visitor to the shop.

In time Count de l'Escalopier became close friends with Houdin, and later, knowing of his all-but-consuming interest in magic, he advanced Houdin 15,000 francs for the construction of a modest theatre where Robert-Houdin could demonstrate his magical marvels.

The performances were to become quite popular. With the opening of each new theatrical season, Houdin unveiled some new and astonishing

feat to his audiences. One of his greatest tricks was “The Light and Heavy Chest.” A small wooden chest was displayed as a cashbox and placed in full view. A volunteer from the audience satisfied the spectators that the box could be lifted with the little finger. Houdin then made a series of hypnotic passes over the box, and the volunteer discovered to his astonishment that he could not, try as he might, lift the box. At the snap of the fingers, the box would become light again.

Years later, when the French government made Houdin ambassador to Algeria (a trouble spot that plagued the French for decades to come), Houdin repeated the feat, but with a twist. This time it was the spectator, an Arab summoned from the audience, who was hypnotized and robbed of the power to lift the box. Dignitaries seated in stage boxes applauded the performance, but the Arab audience was gravely silent, impressed at Houdin’s supernatural powers. They later witnessed a demonstration of a feat more dangerous and far more impressive: Houdin performed his celebrated bullet-catching trick for the Arabs — in which he caught a marked bullet, fired from a gun, between his teeth.

Stage illusions performed by Robert-Houdin included a trick where a human head was seen to float unaided in the air while it answered questions put to it by the performer. This sounds rather pat in print, but no threads or wires were used to bring about the illusion. Another of his inventions was the “Aerial Suspension,” still in use and very popular with present-day illusionists.

In 1846 Houdin presented one of his most astounding feats. Summoned to perform at the Palace of Saint-Cloud for Louis Philippe and his court, Houdin arranged to have several handkerchiefs borrowed from noblemen in the audience. Addressing the king, Robert-Houdin explained that he would cause the borrowed handkerchiefs to vanish and reappear at a place of the king’s choosing. The king thought carefully, then declared that the handkerchiefs should appear near an orange tree outside the castle. As soon as he gave his decision, the king told several of his guards to run to the orange tree in question and surround it to prevent fraud.

The handkerchiefs were gathered and caused to vanish. Then Robert-Houdin directed the king’s men to dig at the base of the tree until they

found a metal chest that had been buried near the base of the tree sixty years *before* the performance.

The chest was uncovered and taken to the king. The chest was locked and rusted shut. “Well, Monsieur Robert-Houdin,” the king said. “Here is a box; am I to conclude it contains the handkerchiefs?”

“Yes,” Houdin replied, “and they have been there for a long period, too.”

“How can that be?” the king asked. “The handkerchiefs were lent to you a quarter of an hour ago.”

“I cannot deny it,” Robert-Houdin replied. “But what would my magic powers avail me if I could not perform incomprehensible tricks? I can prove to your satisfaction the further fact that the box and its contents was deposited under the orange tree sixty years ago.”

After much effort, the rusted box was opened. The king found therein an old parchment, dated June, 1786, written by Joseph Balsamo, which stated in part: “This iron box, containing six handkerchiefs, was placed among the roots of an orange tree by me to serve in performing an act of magic which will be executed sixty years hence.”

The king remarked, “There is decidedly witchcraft about this,” because along with the parchment, the chest contained a sealed envelope containing the six handkerchiefs just borrowed from noblemen in the king’s audience. Writing in *Scribner’s* magazine in 1903, Brander Matthews noted: “Nothing more extraordinary was ever performed by any mere conjuror; indeed, this feat is quite as startling as any of those attributed to Cagliostro himself.. . . Not only is the thing done a seeming impossibility, but it stands forth the more impressively because of the spectacular circumstances of its performance.”

As well as perfecting many effects still used today, Robert-Houdin revolutionized the methods and presentation of magic. He did away with the heavily draped tables of his predecessors, and discarded their habit of appearing in long, flowing robes in favor of ordinary evening clothes. Completely avoiding the mysticism of earlier generations, his books on magic treated the subject as a technical and artistic discipline. His autobiography, a fascinating book, is still in print, and his magical texts are still studied.

As an aside, it might be mentioned that Robert-Houdin experimented with the almost unknown properties of the electromagnet, designed a telephone, and invented the electric doorbell. He was granted awards for the ingenious construction of his automata and received a gold medal for his application of electricity to clocks. He devised an electric light years before Edison and was widely recognized on the European continent for his insight and creative abilities. He died in 1871, leaving behind a rich legacy for succeeding generations of magicians.

The first third of the twentieth century in America saw the influx of immigrants and their gradual assimilation into the atmosphere and culture of the new land. World War I saw America emerge from an isolationist position to one of world involvement. It was a time of change, of enlarging perspectives, where the culture, politics and technology of the Old World jolted against the developing realities of the New.

It was a time when Freud's theories were beginning to be felt, when Einstein's self-fulfilling prophesies, buried in obscure, barbed equations, were talked about but not yet fully understood. It was a time that saw the development of radio, the electric light bulb, and the phonograph; popular music and jazz; the speakeasy, vaudeville, talking pictures, the automobile, assembly lines, the aeroplane.

The heroes of the time reflected the prevailing atmosphere and thus articulated the hopes and dreams of a largely poor, hard-working, and determined immigrant population. The men and women elevated to prominence were, by and large, heroic because they pitted superhuman abilities against impossible odds and won. Some heroes were corrupt, some had feet of clay, some seemed more imagined than real. But in the public eye they were closer to gods than mortals, idols who indicated by their mere existence that there was a pot of gold at the end of that very long rainbow.

If Charlie Chaplin was a hero because he could make people laugh and cry and see themselves in the Little Tramp's unending tragedies, Ty Cobb and Babe Ruth were heroes because they demonstrated how the kid from the slums could make good. The Horatio Alger image became attached to the exploits of rich men like J. P. Morgan and Henry Ford, the Rockefellers, the Du Ponts and other penthouse denizens, as well as

Thomas Edison, Louis Armstrong, Douglas Fairbanks, H. L. Mencken, Bill “Bojangles” Robinson, Thomas “Fats” Waller, even Al Capone and Dillinger.

Harry Houdini impressed himself vividly upon the popular mind because he demonstrated in straightforward, forceful terms the immigrant ideal of the little man pitting his powers against incredible odds. Houdini’s act was classically simple. After performing a few magic tricks, Houdini would stand at stage center and issue a challenge to the audience: anyone in the audience could step forward with any handcuff, manacle, or other restraint and shackle the performer. Without the use of keys or confederates, Houdini would then endeavor to escape from the restraint.

If it sounds simple, a matter of secret lockpicks and such, consider that Houdini was searched before and after each challenge, that he could escape from any restraint, and that there was absolutely no collusion between himself and challengers from the audience. The restraints might be handcuffs, or 90 feet of rope, or steel manacles, or six pairs of specially made shackles, or a canvas straitjacket, or a jail cell, or a locked, double-walled combination safe.

The challengers were not above using trickery themselves. Sometimes Houdini was locked in a pair of handcuffs whose inner works had been deliberately rusted or welded shut. Under such circumstances, once the cuffs were in place, they couldn’t be opened with a crowbar let alone a key. He was tied in sheets of cloth and the sheets then splashed with water;

the effect of the water was such that it shrunk the cloth, thus making it harder and harder to escape as time wore on, because the sheets were gradually tightening their grip around him. He was bound with restraints that were specially designed to keep him locked up — locks with nine pin tumblers instead of the usual five, locks that needed three keys instead of one to open them. Handcuffed, tied, chained, manacled, shackled, and hung upside down from the top of a building, he would dangle far above the crowd of spectators to effect an escape.

He could escape from an oak packing case that was nailed and chained shut after he was put inside. He could escape from a block of ice, from a Russian prison, from an English jail cell designed by Oliver Cromwell, from a galvanized iron can filled with water and sealed with massive locks. Whether the restraint was rope, cloth, wood, iron, or steel, whatever its nature or design, whatever test conditions were put upon the demonstration, however impossible the test, no restraint known to humanity could stop Houdini.

His name was in the newspapers on an almost daily basis, becoming a household word long before the days of television and the super electronic hype. More biographies have been written about him than any other magician. Even as this is written, new books and films on Houdini are in the works; he is a prominent figure in a recent best-selling novel, and he still rates as the best-known magician of all time.

When one considers the nature of his specialty, his achievement is all the more remarkable. Unlike other famous figures in the entertainment world, his major work is not captured for the ages on film, on recordings, or in books he wrote, inventions he created, or world records he set. Many people living today never saw him, know little of his achievements, yet they know his name. He was the master of showmanship — the supreme publicity-getter — and his name is engraved on the public consciousness, perhaps for all time.

Houdini died the year before Lindbergh crossed the Atlantic. He did not live to see the development of television, of a polio vaccine, of an advanced technology that would allow men to walk on the moon. Too, he did not live long enough to experience the profound changes that would come from the Great Depression, the cancerous growth of the Nazi war

machine, the holocaust of World War II. His death was tragic and we can only speculate as to how he might have reacted to the changing direction of history.

The key to Houdini's fame was that he knew what to do and how best to do it. In the field of magic this comes down to *method* (or secret) and *presentation* (or delivery), and beyond doubt the bottom line of success in magic is presentation. Subtle methods, misdirection, and proper presentation are the real secrets of magic, and it is these ingredients that form the subject matter of this book.

2

The Hand Is Smarter than the Eye

When asked how a magic trick is done, the average person will generally respond that it's all done with mirrors, threads, or magnets. If an object displayed by the magician suddenly vanishes, he will hear people say that it's up his sleeve, or that the object vanished because the hand is quicker than the eye. All of these theories are wrong almost all of the time.

To begin with, magical methods are usually simpler than most people realize. Thus when the magician causes his assistant to suddenly float in midair, it is not done by threads, invisible wires, or magnets, but far easier (and more dependable) methods. When the magician shows a hat empty and then produces a rabbit from it, it is not true that the rabbit was in the hat all along, or that the rabbit was hidden in the magician's sleeve. Doubtless these methods have been considered at one time or another, but they present enormous technical problems to the magician. Always and without exception the professional looks for the simplest and most dependable means to perform a given trick.

Naturally, questions arise. If a trick is simple to do, why is it that it succeeds in completely amazing the audience? If the method is so elementary, why is it not transparently obvious as well? The answer to both questions is that the method used in a trick is only one component of the secret. The other elements are *psychology* and *misdirection* — in short, fooling the mind as well as the eye. To put it another way, misdirection is the art of getting the audience to think the wrong thing at the right time.

Traditional misdirection relies to a degree on distracting the spectator's attention. By way of an example, when you are in a roomful of people, look out the window, fix your gaze on some imaginary object in the sky, and say, "I wonder if that's a flying saucer." Chances are excellent that the people in the room will stampede to the window to see the mysterious

object. Note that you didn't direct your comment to anyone in particular. But you created sudden interest by your remark and thus created a distraction sufficient to cause a crowd to gather.

Traditional misdirection applied to magic follows somewhat along the lines of the saying "Don't let the left hand know what the right hand is doing." Thus, while the magician's right hand plucks a card from the air, his left hand secretly palms another card. Audience interest is directed at the right hand because that's where all the action seems to be, so the audience never sees the magician palm a card with his left hand.

In almost all cases, the traditional or older methods of misdirection required that the open movement of one hand served to distract attention from the secret movement of the other hand, but in the past half century a new theory of misdirection has begun to evolve. The creation of Tony Slydini, its basic precept is that the secret move is accomplished when *nothing* is apparently being done. An important corollary is the use of so-called invisible movements to accomplish the desired end.

Invisible Information

We'll discuss the corollary first. It is well known that the eye can see a great number of details in a particular scene but that the mind screens out unimportant information and directs the eye to focus on only that which the mind considers important. Thus, in reading this page, you probably don't know which page number it is (without looking, of course), nor do you know whether the page number is at the top or bottom of the page. There is no reason for you to remember this kind of information or even to take note of it because it's not vitally important in the reading of a book. Hence, although the information is in plain view, it is mentally edited and is "invisible" to the conscious mind.

An amusing visual example occurs in the cartoon depicted in figure 1. In the first three frames you are looking at a mustachioed fellow as his gaze shifts from left to center to right. In the last frame you suddenly realize that he has no mustache! In examining the first three frames, the mind has no reason to suspect that the “mustache” might not be a mustache at all, so it ignores the mustache and simply focuses on the man. It is only in the last frame that you realize you have been duped.

In sum, if a piece of information *seems* unimportant, it will be ignored by the mind. This is the essential secret of the newer forms of misdirection. Applications and developments are many, as you will learn in the following pages.

Testing the Power of Misdirection

The following example of misdirection incorporates a number of elements of Slydini’s theories in a clever way. In effect, you display an empty match packet. The spectator, who is seated across from you, can examine the packet to prove to his own satisfaction that the packet is empty and ungimmicked. The spectator is also aware that both of your hands are unmistakably empty as well.

Now you take back the empty match packet and place it into the left hand. Commenting that an empty packet is necessary as a catalyst if you ever need a full packet, you wave the right hand over the left hand, snap the fingers, and withdraw the empty packet. Snapping the fingers again, you open the left hand to reveal that it now contains a *full* packet of matches!

From the previous discussion we know that the full packet was not concealed up the sleeve, nor did you use threads, magnets, and so on. In fact, nothing is used except the objects mentioned in the way of apparatus. The real secret is not gimmicks or sleight of hand but misdirection.

Consider first the setting. If you are seated across the table from the spectator, chances are that you are having dinner or a cup of coffee. This means that there is some object on the table large enough to conceal the full packet of matches. In figure 2 the full packet is shown concealed

behind a cup of coffee. How does it get there? When the spectator turns away for a moment, or leaves the table or is otherwise distracted, you simply place the full packet behind the coffee cup.

When you are ready to perform this simple trick, reach into the right pocket and remove the empty match packet. Open it and act as if you've just noticed that it is empty. Smile and say: "This reminds me of something I was once shown. Here, look at the packet. See if you can see anything wrong with it."

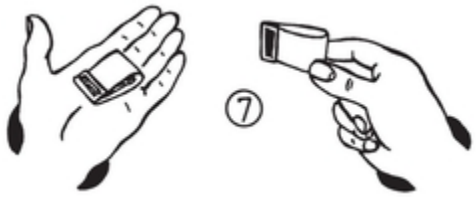
As you say this, lean across the table, toss the empty packet from hand to hand as shown in figure 3, and give it to the spectator to examine. Note in figure 3 that the spectator clearly sees that both your hands are empty.

While the spectator examines the empty match packet, bring your hands back to the near edge of the table, as shown in figure 4. Note that the left hand is near the coffee cup and hence near the concealed full match packet. As you bring the hands to the position of figure 4, sit back in the chair in a fully relaxed position.

After the spectator has examined the empty match packet and presumably found nothing wrong with it, take it back in the following manner. The right hand reaches across the table to take the empty packet. The body naturally leans forward as this is done. But at the same time the left hand comes to rest on the table directly over the full match packet (figure 5). This action is completely natural because the left hand steadies the body as you reach across the table. Since this action is completely natural, it follows that it is completely invisible as well. The spectator has no reason to notice the movement of the left hand, so his mind ignores it.

The left hand simply curls around the match packet. The right hand inserts the empty match packet into the left hand as shown in figure 6. Wave the right hand over the closed left fist. Pretend that nothing has happened and wave the right hand over the left hand again. Comment that in the presence of an empty match packet, a full packet will sometimes materialize. Snap the right fingers and then withdraw the empty packet.

Now slowly turn the left hand palm up, open the left hand, and reveal the full packet of matches (figure 7).



As simple as this trick is, it will be well received by the spectator, even several spectators if you are having dinner with friends at a restaurant. It is an example of natural magic, a kind of magic that just seems to happen spontaneously without special apparatus or involved manipulation. The *real* secret of this trick is the invisible movement of the left hand in figure 5. Note that this happens well before the end of the trick, so the spectator has no chance to backtrack.

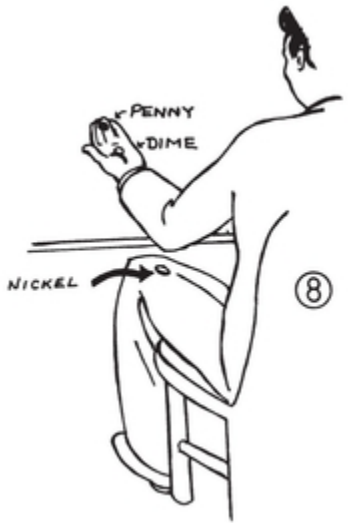
Note too that this method is far easier than the popular idea that the magician "used his sleeves." Even if the full match packet were concealed in the jacket sleeve, how would the magician extract it from the sleeve and load it into the closed left fist with all eyes on him? The trick can be done that way, but the misdirection approach is easier and far stronger because you fool the mind rather than the eye.

Super Transpo

The following trick is a classic example of the use of misdirection of the senses. The brilliant invention of John Benzais, it is a startling transposition between a borrowed dime and a borrowed penny. The coins may be marked. The spectator holds the dime and you hold the penny. Under these impossible conditions, the two marked coins change places.

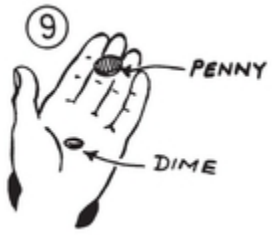
Method: The secret lies partially in the use of an extra coin, which the audience is never aware of, and which, incidentally, is neither a dime nor a penny. More important is the *way* in which this extra coin is employed. It is assumed that you are seated across the table from a spectator. When you

are ready to perform this routine, secretly remove a nickel from your pocket and place it on your leg as shown in figure 8.



(You've already been given half the secret to this trick, but even at this point most people would be helpless to extrapolate from here to the complete solution. How does a *nickel* figure into a transposition between a dime and a penny? The answer is diabolical.)

Presentation: Ask the spectator if he has any change in his pocket. When he removes a handful of change, tell him you would like to borrow a dime and a penny for the demonstration. Pick up the dime and place it on your left palm. Then pick up the penny and place it on your left fingertips (figure 9). Tell the spectator he can put the rest of the change away.



Close your left hand. The result of this action is that the dime is automatically palmed, while the left thumb and fingers hold the penny. Place the hand below the level of the tabletop. As you do, explain that the

demonstration must be conducted in relative darkness, so you would like the spectator to hold the coins under the table and to keep them there at all times.

As you place your left hand under the table, pick up the nickel with the left thumb and fingers (figure 10), then reach under the table and give the nickel and penny to the spectator.

The spectator holds both coins, the nickel and the penny, and he keeps them out of sight under the table. In the meantime, with your empty right hand, tap the tabletop at different spots, saying that you want to find the most porous spot.

Act as if you've found the right spot. Then reach under the table with the left hand and ask the spectator to give you the penny. This is the crux of the method. Since the coins are out of sight under the table, the spectator can tell one coin from the other *only* by sense of touch. He has not previously held the dime and penny in his hand (that was why you had him take out a handful of change so that you — not he — could pick a dime and penny for the trick). This means that he has no way of distinguishing the dime from the penny except in terms of the relative size of the coins.

So he hands you the nickel, thinking that it must be the penny because it is the larger of the two coins he holds. In his own mind, the spectator is satisfied that he holds the dime while you hold the penny.

Take the nickel from him and leave it in your lap. Remember that you have the dime palmed in your left hand. The left hand comes up into view, closed into a fist. Slap the left hand palm-down against the table as shown in figure 11.

Then lift the left hand, revealing that the dime is now on the table. All that remains is for the flabbergasted spectator to bring his hand into view and show that he now has the penny. You have accomplished a transposition between two borrowed coins under seemingly impossible conditions.

Note that psychology and misdirection are skillfully blended in this trick to lead the spectator astray. Since you are using his coins, both of which are returned to him at the close of the trick, there appears to be no chance for trickery on your part. Also, he *thinks* he holds on to the dime right from the start, so he is that much more baffled to find at the end of the trick that it has changed into the penny.

Routined Magic

Another invisible weapon in the magician's arsenal is the way two or more tricks can be routined together so that one trick sets up or prepares the way for the next trick. Seeing the first trick performed, the spectator is unaware that the real purpose of this trick is to set the stage for a really impressive follow-up trick. The following effect is an excellent example of how two disparate ideas can be routined together to produce a strong and unexpected finish.

As the audience sees it, the effect is this: You remove a penny matchbox from your pocket, open the matchbox, and dump out six matches. The spectator is then invited to test his wits; using just the six matches, he is required to produce four equilateral triangles (an equilateral triangle is one in which all three sides are equal).

Of course he can't break a match, or use extra matches to achieve the desired goal. Under these conditions, most spectators will try the puzzle

for a few minutes and ultimately give up. Then show him the answer. It is ridiculously simple, but the spectator tends to place limitations and conditions on the puzzle that were never implied in the original statement, so he will curse himself for not having seen the solution from the beginning.

You then ask if he would like to see something more perplexing, a demonstration for which even you do not fully comprehend the solution. You remove a penny from your pocket, show it on the right palm, and place it under the table.

Then, with your left hand, you pick up the closed matchbox and slap it against the table. Instantly the penny jumps up *through* the table and rattles around inside the matchbox. The spectator himself may open the matchbox and find the penny inside.

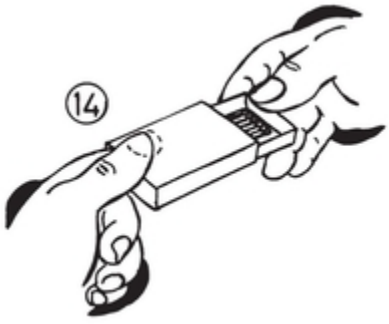
Method: The match puzzle is itself an example of how a spectator will place constraints on a problem and actually make the problem harder to solve than it really is. It is these unnecessary constraints that make the puzzle impossible to solve, but remove the mental constraints and the solution becomes childishly simple.

When you hand the six matches to the spectator by tossing them onto the table before him, he assumes that the matches must remain flat on the table in the construction of the triangle. Thus a three-dimensional solution (in this case a pyramid) never occurs to him. The author suggests that you construct the pyramid by gluing the tips of six matches together to form the pyramid shown in figure 12. The matchstick pyramid is then placed in your right pocket and is not shown until the spectator has given up on the puzzle. This makes it easy to display the solution without having to fumble about, sometimes forever, trying to hold six loose matches in the shape of a pyramid.

The coin trick is also set up in advance, but in a subtle way. First you need two pennies that look alike. They should also have the same date in the event that an eagle-eyed spectator notices the date on the penny at the start of the trick. Place one penny in your right pocket, along with the matchstick pyramid. Then place six loose matchsticks in the tray (drawer) of the matchbox.

The other penny is then wedged between the tray of the matchbox and the cover as shown in figure 13. Note that the matchbox is not completely closed. Carefully place it in your left pocket. This completes the preparation. The trick can be performed at any time when you are seated at a table with friends and think the time is right for a bit of trickery.

Presentation: Ask the spectator if he'd like to try a simple puzzle. Almost everyone thinks he has a natural ability at solving simple puzzles, so the spectator is likely to say yes. Remove the matchbox from your left pocket, holding it as shown in figure 14. Note that the box is gripped so that the left forefinger contacts the penny that is wedged in the matchbox. The left thumb contacts the box directly above the hidden penny.



The right hand removes the tray from the box and dumps the six matches out in front of the spectator. It is important to note that the left thumb and forefinger still pinch the hidden penny, keeping it in place.

The right hand then slides the tray back into the box so the situation is once again as depicted in figure 13 — the hidden penny is once again wedged between the tray and the cover of the matchbox (although the tray is now empty of matchsticks). The whole idea here is that you have casually shown the matchbox to be empty without calling specific attention to this fact. All you've done is remove the tray, dump out the six matches, and replace the tray in the most natural manner possible. Obviously the matchbox must now be empty, and it is this false conclusion that you have planted in the spectator's mind as you set the rigged matchbox on the tabletop.

Invite the spectator to form four equilateral triangles with the six matches. For the reasons mentioned above, most people find it impossible. When the spectator admits defeat, point out to him that most people assume a two-dimensional solution is called for, whereas in fact the solution is three-dimensional. You then remove the matchstick pyramid of figure 12 from your pocket and toss it out. The pyramid contains four triangular faces, and each face represents an equilateral triangle, thus satisfying the modest conditions of the puzzle.

You're now about to shift to the trick with the penny. To achieve a smooth transition, mention that there are some psychological puzzles that you yourself have had trouble analyzing. To illustrate a simple example, you remove the duplicate penny from your jacket pocket, show it, let the spectator examine it, and then take it in your right hand.

Place the right hand under the table. As soon as you do so, drop the penny into your shoe to get rid of it, but keep the right hand under the table. You want to distract audience attention, so you say, "We also need the matchbox." Look at the matchbox as you talk and the spectator's gaze will follow yours.

Your left hand grasps the matchbox and picks it up exactly as shown in figure 15. The thumb is at the back of the box where the coin is; the fingers are at the front of the box.

Your right hand slaps up against the underside of the table. At the same time the left hand slaps the matchbox down against the tabletop. The left thumb and fingers simultaneously squeeze the tray shut. This forces the concealed penny to jar loose and rattle around inside the matchbox.

Instantly bring the empty right hand out into view. Have the spectator open the matchbox. The penny has penetrated the tabletop and has ended up inside the closed matchbox.

Performed this way — with the match puzzle used to set up the spectator, to make him think the matchbox is empty — the trick of causing the penny to apparently jump up through the table and into the box seems truly amazing.

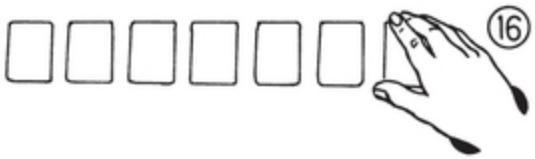
The Gambler's Palm

Two areas connected with magic are of particular interest to laymen. These concern the subjects of ESP and gambling. Mental magic and gambling will be treated in separate chapters later in this book, but for the present we will discuss a method of *palming* cards and transferring palmed cards from hand to hand that appears to demand the greatest of skill, but that in fact uses a form of psychology known as *conditioning.*

Conditioning comes down to this: by *apparently* repeating the same actions over and over, the audience is lulled into believing that all is as it should be. But a subtle change in handling, never detected by the audience, is responsible for the unexpected result of the trick. Hence, a demonstration of supposedly incredible skill reduces to a bit of self-working chicanery.

The effect is as follows: The magician explains that gamblers practice certain exercises to learn to palm cards correctly. They start with small

cards and gradually work their way up to full-size cards (this is completely untrue, but it seems reasonable, so the audience accepts it). The magician tosses out seven blank cards. The cards measure about 3“ by 2½”. Two of the blank cards are signed by the spectator. Then all seven cards are apparently mixed face down and dealt into a row on the table as shown in figure 16.



With both hands palm down, the magician begins scooping up cards off the table, first a card with the right hand (figure 16), then a card with the left hand, and so on, until he has about half the cards in each hand.

“The idea,” he explains, “is to learn to palm cards as quickly as possible with either hand. When he’s gotten the knack of it, with about half the cards in each hand, the gambler studies the next problem. By sense of touch alone he has to transfer the two cards you signed to one hand and all of the other cards into the other hand. It’s difficult, but I’ll try it.”

The magician makes a quick motion with both hands. Then the right hand is opened and all five of the blank cards are found in that hand. The left hand is opened and there he reveals that he holds just the two signed cards.

Method and Presentation: The trick requires no skill whatever, nor are there any gimmicks, extra cards, and so forth. You *are* cheating, but in a subliminal way that the spectator never catches.

The only requirement is seven cards, each measuring approximately 3” by 2½”. They are easily made from 3”-by-5” index cards; simply cut each of four such blank cards in half. Seven halves are used in this trick. The reason small cards are used is that they are easy for the beginner to palm.

Toss out the seven cards and have the spectator examine them. The cards are exactly what they appear to be — seven blank cards. Ask the spectator to pick two of the cards and initial them.

As he does this, pick up the remaining five blank cards, square them up, and place them into the left hand. Take the spectator's first signed card and place it writing-side down in position A (see figure 17). Then deal a blank card into position B.

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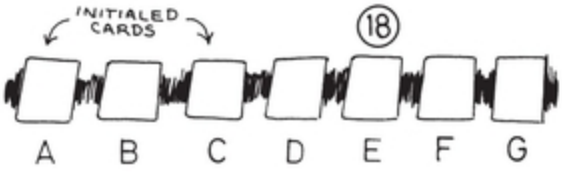
Take the second signed card and place it writing-side down in position C (figure 18). Then deal another blank card into position D. Deal the remaining blank cards from the left hand into positions E, F, G, as in figure 18. All cards are blank-side up. Tell the spectator, "First the gambler palms cards at random, taking about half of them with each hand just to mix the cards up." Take the card at the far right (G) with the palm-down right hand. Take the adjacent card (F) with the left hand (figure 19).



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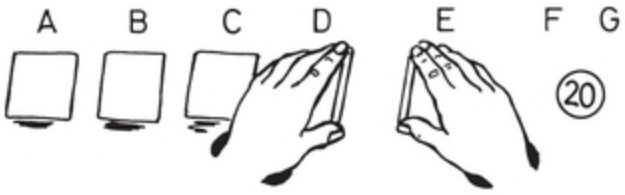
The right hand then drops down onto the next card (E) and scoops it up off the table, holding it under the card already in the right hand (figure 20). The right thumb aids in holding the two cards securely in the right hand. The left hand then similarly takes the next card (D).



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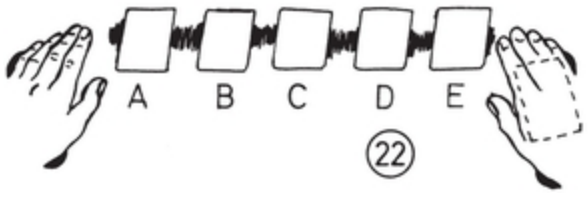
The right hand takes the next card (C) and then the left hand takes the next card (B). Finally, the right hand scoops up the last card left on the table (A). Both hands remain palm down throughout. There are now three cards in the left hand and four in the right hand.

"Now the gambler replaces the cards, and practices the gambler's palm again." Here is where the result of psychological conditioning comes into play. You are going to replace the cards one at a time until you have a row of five, but you are *not going* to do it fairly. The spectator has been conditioned by the steady, rhythmic way the cards were gathered by the left and right hands; he doesn't know what ultimate effect to anticipate, so he assumes all is fair. In fact, you cheat.

The left hand places the bottom card of its packet back on the table in position A, as shown in figure 21. The easiest way to do this is to push the card free with the thumb. The right hand then deposits the bottom card of its packet on the table in position B. The left hand places its next card in position C. The right hand places its next card in position D. Finally, the left hand places a card in position E.

You remark: "The gambler still has one card palmed in each hand. Now he tries to increase the pace." In fact, there are two cards in the right hand and *none* in the left hand, as shown in figure 22. The absence of any card in the left hand is concealed by the fact that both hands are palm down and slightly curled, as if each hand held a card.



Now gather the cards one at a time, beginning with the right end of the row, taking a card first with the right hand (E), then the next (D) with the left hand, the next (C) with the right, and so on, just as described earlier. Continue the process until all of the cards have been gathered.

Keep the hands apart. Tell the spectator: “The real test of the gambler’s skill comes into play now. I have about half of the cards in each hand. I’m going to attempt the hand-to-hand transfer; in other words, by sense of touch alone, I’ll attempt to transfer your signed cards to one hand and all the other cards to the opposite hand.”

Caution the spectator to watch closely. He can because there is nothing to see. Make a suspicious gesture, as if throwing cards from hand to hand, but be sure to keep both hands palm down. Then turn the right hand palm up, open the hand, and fan the cards to reveal five blank cards. This usually comes as quite a surprise to the audience.

Pause for a second to let the effect register, then turn the left hand palm up, open it, and fan the two cards to show that the left hand holds the two signed cards (figure 23).

Students of magic will recognize this effect as a variation of a puzzle known as “The Thieves and Sheep.” Presented as a puzzle, it will be accepted as such. But presented as an inside secret of the gambling fraternity, it will be taken as a feat of remarkable dexterity.

Telepathy for Two

In chapter one, mention was made of a trick known as “Second Sight,” which involved an effect known today as “Two-Person Telepathy.” Since

we do not yet know one way or the other if telepathy exists, or how to control it if it does in fact exist, it is necessary to fake the result to give the appearance of the real thing. A code of some sort is usually employed to signal the blindfolded medium as to which object has been provided by the spectator. The problem is not in devising a code (there are many, and some are quite sophisticated), but in how to misdirect the minds of the spectators so they will not suspect the use of a code.

The following routine, using borrowed objects and no gimmicks, combines misdirection with a simple method, and has been a favorite with the author for several years.

While at the home of a friend, the *mentalist* and his assistant propose a test of telepathy under stringent test conditions. The assistant (or *medium)* is conducted to an adjoining room and the door closed. The mentalist borrows five slips of paper and draws an ESP symbol on each. The five standard ESP symbols are shown in figure 24. One symbol is drawn on each piece of paper.

One of the spectators present is asked to choose a symbol. When he's done this, the mentalist borrows a sheet of aluminum foil and directs the spectator to wrap the foil around the chosen symbol, much the way he would wrap a package, so that the paper containing the chosen symbol is completely enclosed in metal foil.

The spectator then places the foil-wrapped package into a borrowed envelope, seals the envelope, and signs his name across the seal. The mentalist points out that it is clearly impossible for the medium, locked away in the next room, to know the chosen symbol, since it is doubly sealed — first in metal foil, and then in an opaque envelope.

At the mentalist's request, the spectator fastens the sealed envelope to the door behind which the medium waits. The mentalist then takes a blank slip of paper and slides it under the door for the medium's use. The slip of paper is borrowed and contains absolutely no preparation. It may be

examined before and after, and in fact can be kept by the spectators at the close of the test.

The medium, still locked behind the door, concentrates for a moment, and then says that she can see a telepathic image of the symbol in the sealed envelope. She draws a picture on the slip of paper and slides it out under the door.

A spectator takes the slip of paper and holds it up. It may contain a drawing of a Star. The envelope is opened and the chosen symbol removed. It too is a Star — for a perfect match.

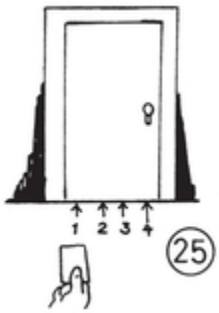
Method: Although the trick appears to be airtight, there is a code, and a simple one at that. As in all magic, though, that is only half of the secret. The other half lies in the way the audience is led astray. This is accomplished by the mentalist when he insists that all objects be borrowed, and, more importantly, when he later emphasizes several times that the chosen symbol is doubly sealed, making it *impossible* for the medium to see the chosen symbol by normal means.

In order for her to know the symbol, even by telepathy, the medium would have to somehow "see" through the door, through the sealed envelope, and finally through the heavy metal foil to get a vision of the chosen symbol. Even if blessed with X-ray vision, the medium's task would be a formidable one. By underlining the impossibility of seeing the symbol sealed in the envelope, the mentalist misdirects audience attention in that direction. They must therefore be preoccupied with the problem of how the medium could possibly "see" into the envelope.

In fact, she doesn't. There are five ESP symbols and the spectator makes his choice of one of them. The mentalist must then signal by code which of the five symbols the spectator chose. The code comes into play when the mentalist slips the blank piece of paper under the door to the medium on the other side.

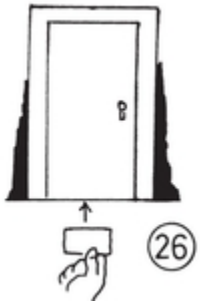
Referring to figure 25, note that there are four places where the piece of blank paper can be slipped under the door. From the mentalist's point of view, the first is at the far left, the next just left of center, the next to the

right of center, and the last to the far right; from the medium's view, the directions are reversed.



If the piece of paper is slid under the door at position 1, this tells the medium the chosen symbol is the Circle; if the paper is slid under the door at position 2, the chosen symbol is the Cross; at position 3, it's the Square; and at position 4, the Wavy Lines.

Suppose the chosen symbol is the Star? The performer would slide the paper under the door at dead center. Just to be certain, he slides it under the door longside first, as depicted in figure 26. For any other symbol he slides the paper under the door short-side first, as in figure 25.



The "hook" in this trick, the thing that stops the audience, is the use of aluminum foil to seal the chosen symbol. Nothing less than an X-ray machine can penetrate metal foil, and even X-rays can't detect a *written* symbol on a piece of paper. The audience knows this, so they find themselves wondering how the medium could possibly "see" the symbol.

Numerology

Closely allied to the study of mental magic is the subject of numerology. It is the belief of numerologists that seemingly random numbers relate to personality, historic events, behavioral patterns, and–most important–to the determination of things yet to come. In numerological theory there are magic numbers, magic squares, and other diverse wonders locked behind the facade of even the most ordinary-appearing series of digits. There may or may not be something to all this, but the important point, as noted before, is that it *seems* to make sense, so the audience accepts it.

To test the ability of numerologists to predict the future, the performer proposes a simple test. He asks the spectator to remove several dollar bills from his pocket. These bills have been in the spectator's possession for at least a short time, so they have acquired an affinity with his personality. The performer says that his only interest is in the serial numbers on the bills. Looking over the bills, he decides on a single digit and jots it down on a slip of paper.

No one knows the number chosen by the performer. He folds the paper in half and places it aside. Then the spectator is invited to look over the dollar bills and decide on any single digit. When he's done this, he jots it down on another slip of paper. He then returns the dollar bills to his pocket.

Let's say that the spectator's number is 6. Tell him that he must convert his chosen number into a magic number by a numerological ritual. Have him first double the number, add 2 to the result, then multiply that total by 5, and finally, subtract 7.

The end result in this example will be the number 63. When the spectator announces this result, the performer says: "The magic number 63 correctly predicted our choices. You chose the number 6 ..." Here he hesitates for dramatic effect, then goes on to open his own slip of paper and say, "And I chose the number 3." Thus the magic number 63 correctly divined each of the two digits chosen originally by the performer and the spectator.

Method: As before, there are two ingredients to this trick — how it is done and how to do it. How it is done comes down to this. When you give the

spectator the last instruction, "... and finally, subtract 7," in the example above, you are performing the key action of the trick. When you previously glanced at the serial numbers on the bills given to you by the spectator, you chose any digit you saw and jotted it down on a slip of paper. At the finish of the trick, when you give the spectator the last instruction, mentally subtract your chosen number from 10; the number you tell him to subtract is the difference between your number and 10. Thus, if as above you chose 3, you would say, ". . . and finally, subtract 7 [10 minus 3] from the result." If you chose 4, you would say, ". . . and finally, subtract 6 [10 minus 4] from the result."

The spectator will arrive at a two-digit number, and if he correctly followed the conversion process already described, this two-digit number will always be made up of his chosen digit and yours.

Presentation: Now we come to the important part of the trick, how to do it. All of the introductory material on numerological theory must be used and it must be spoken in a serious way. Obviously you could use *any* two digits, not necessarily those on the spectator's dollar bills. But by tying in the *patter* (or story) with the spectator's folding money, you make it seem that *he* was entirely responsible for the success of the demonstration–that only *his* numbers would work–and that those numbers had a peculiar affinity with the resultant "magic number" he arrived at.

The end result is clear. Shorn of patter and presentation, the trick is little more than a mathematical curio that can be performed on a pocket calculator. But presented in an atmosphere of seriousness, with the suggestion that there *might* be something to numerology after all, the trick takes on a strange life of its own, offering the spectator the tantalizing possibility that there may be more to this business of lucky numbers or magic numbers than previously believed.

Concluding Observations

The object of this chapter is to describe the reasons why magical effects, properly presented, have a dramatic effect entirely out of proportion to the

simple means employed. The tricks themselves are simple. In most of them the magician uses borrowed props, no special gimmicks, no sleight of hand. It is not the use of borrowed objects that impresses audiences, but the way in which these objects are used, the way in which the tricks are presented, that the audience will remember.

Misdirection and psychology — the principle known as conditioning, the use of minor details to distract attention, the application of invisible or unnoticed movements, using routining to present one trick while setting up another — these and more are the real secrets of magic. The structure of a trick is in many ways like the structure of a joke: a situation is set up, and then a surprise ending or punch line is suddenly sprung on the audience. The audience laughs at the joke, but grasps in surprise at the mysterious ending of the magical effect.

Conceding that the power of advanced sleight of hand, special gimmicks, and accelerated techniques are used by professionals, it must be understood that these are only ingredients. The ability to dazzle and astonish an audience reflects the ability to apply misdirection and psychology in the strongest way possible.

The points covered in this chapter will arise again and again in the following pages. Effects and methods may vary, and the routines may involve cards or coins or rope or mental mysteries, but the foundation of each trick rests on the principles outlined in this chapter. The successful magician is always presented with the same question: given a certain trick, how would that trick be handled if it were done by real magic? Tricks are analyzed to eliminate telltale discrepancies (the so-called suicide structure of a trick implies that the trick leaves behind enough clues to give itself away; the magician’s aim is to seal off all such avenues that might lead to a correct solution to how the trick works). Magical effects are analyzed for proper handling, for simplicity, but most of all for credibility.

While the tricks in this chapter (and indeed, in the entire book) are basically easy to perform, it would be a serious mistake to conclude that they can be properly performed immediately after they are read for the first time. Practice is required so that effect and method are smoothly handled. Walk through the trick the way a stage actor walks through a scene, by acting as if you are presenting the trick for a spectator. In this

way you will begin to assume the proper role and will ready yourself for the first “live” performance.

Try the tricks on friends or family. Don’t be discouraged if a trick doesn’t go over well the first time you do it. It seldom will. Practice is required, not just in the way you handle the props but in the way you handle the audience. It will all come with time and experience–and the look of amazement on the spectator’s face is what makes it all worthwhile.

3

Closeup Magic

Basically, any magic that is performed at close quarters is *closeup magic.* We'll use the term in this chapter to include after-dinner tricks, impromptu tricks with borrowed objects, and tricks suitable as icebreakers at parties.

In the last several years the closeup field has grown immensely. This has been reflected in the introduction of many new techniques, new approaches, and fresh ideas into the field. One of the most important elements in the closeup worker's bag of tricks is a concept mentioned earlier, that of routining. In this chapter the tricks are structured as mini-routines, series of two or three quick tricks using ordinary objects.

A friendly word of warning: Many of these stunts have a flavor of trick photography about them; they fool the eye and seem to defy logic. It may take five minutes to learn each trick but it is best to practice in private. If something goes wrong — and it will, it will–you will look absolutely foolish, but only you will know it. When you've mastered these tricks — only then should you venture out to perform them.

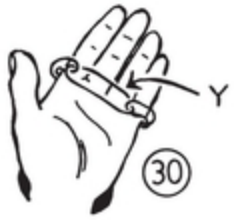
A final word: Because these routines have a Lewis Carroll quality about them and were probably all invented by mad geniuses, they tend to amuse and bewilder the onlooker simultaneously. An audience will quickly gather, especially at parties. If you sense that they want to see more, you can move logically to tricks with cards, coins, rope, and so on, as covered elsewhere in this book. Thus the tricks and routines in this chapter can be used by themselves, or they can be exploited as an introduction to more baffling mysteries.

Banded Together

The first three tricks use rubber bands. The leadoff item is the author's handling of an idea once described by the writer Ken Crossen. Two rubber bands are used. They are unmistakably linked together so they cannot come apart. Then, slowly and with no apparent sleight of hand, the magician causes the rubber bands to penetrate one another and unlink.

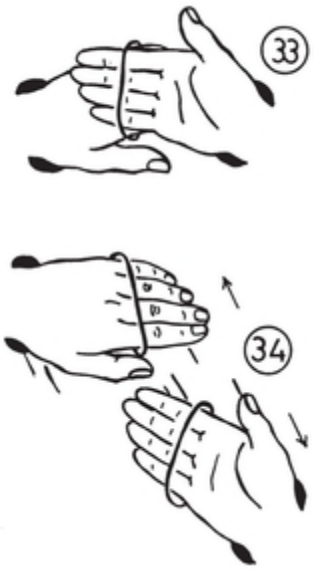
Method: This explanation must be followed with rubber bands in hand for it to make sense. Even then it will take you three or four tries to get the details straight. To start, loop the rubber bands together as shown in figure 27. Then, inserting your forefingers up through the hole marked X in figure 28, grasp one rubber band (by both strands) with each forefinger and stretch the bands apart, as shown in figure 29. This emphasizes the fact that the two rubber bands are firmly linked together.

With the situation as shown in figure 29, slip the other three fingers of your left hand up through the hole marked X and release your right forefinger. The situation now is shown in figure 30.



With your right thumb and forefinger, lift the forward strand (marked Y in figure 30) of the rubber band that lies against the palm (see figure 31). Tug on it to again emphasize that the two bands are firmly linked. Then turn the left hand palm down and close it into a fist. But as you do so, secretly slip your left fingers into the loop of the lower rubber band. An exposed view is shown in figure 32.

Keep the left hand closed in a fist. Now slip your right fingers under the top strand of the upper rubber band (figure 33). Open the left hand so it is palm down and flat. The right hand then moves back toward the body while the left hand simultaneously moves forward. The result is shown in figure 34: the rubber bands have mysteriously unlinked.



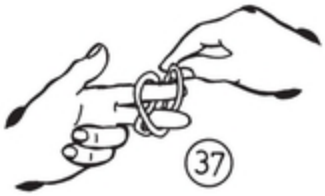
If you find that the rubber bands don't unlink every time you perform the trick, it is probably because they have become twisted at some point in the handling prior to figure 30. When you reach figure 30, the rubber bands must be in an untwisted condition. From this point on, the trick will work every time if you follow the written instructions.

Bounce Band

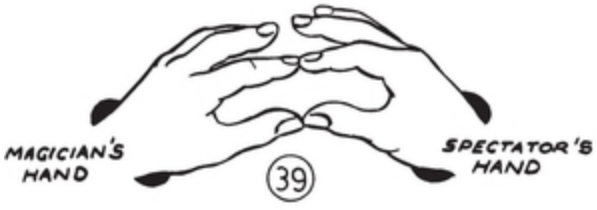
If the audience asks to see a repeat of the above trick, tell them you will make it even harder. You'll use only one rubber band, and a spectator will assist in keeping things honest. Actually you are practicing a magician's form of double-talk; you are not going to repeat the trick and you're not going to make it harder. *This* version works on a different principle, so anyone who tries to tie this trick to "Banded Together" will be led up a blind alley.

Toss one rubber band aside. Loop the other over the left forefinger as shown in figure 35. The important point to note is that the left middle finger is in back of the rubber band.

Twist the rubber band as shown in figure 36. Then bring it under the left middle finger, around the back of that finger, and hook it onto the forefinger again (figure 37).



The end situation is shown in figure 38. Be sure to emphasize that the rubber band has been *doubly* looped over the left forefinger. Now, to keep you honest, ask the spectator to place his right forefinger against your left forefinger, and his right thumb against your left thumb. The result is shown in figure 39 (with the rubber band omitted for clarity).



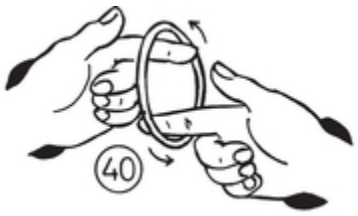
You and the spectator slowly close your respective thumbs and forefingers together to further trap the rubber band. It looks hopeless: there is no way to free the rubber band. But undaunted, you reach up under the left thumb with the right forefinger and thumb, grasp the strands of the portion of the rubber band looped around the middle finger, and pull them sharply away from the middle finger. The result is that the rubber band is free. (It is appropriate to bow to the applause.)

In trying “Bounce Band” the first time, you may find that the stunt will not work. This is almost always due to the fact that in going from figure 36 to figure 37 you have inadvertently put an extra half-twist or full twist in the rubber band. In fact, after you grasp the rubber band with the right hand as shown in figure 36 and bring it under the middle finger, it is important that you *don’t* put an extra twist in the rubber band as you hook it onto the left forefinger. If you follow the procedure carefully, you should have no problem with this mystifying trick.

Mass Hypnosis

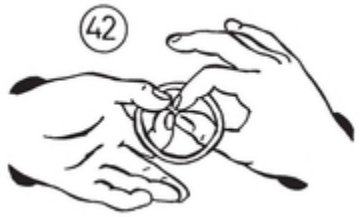
Now try the final feat in this quick trilogy of rubber-band tricks. Say that you will tighten the conditions even more. This time you will use but two fingers of each hand and a single rubber band. Surely all will become clear now, even to the most befuddled spectator.

Hold the rubber band as shown in figure 40. Twirl the fingers in the direction of the arrows. Then stop, as if remembering that you are twirling the fingers the wrong way. Twirl the fingers in the opposite direction. In fact it makes no difference which way you twirl the rubber band, but it is details like this that tend to throw the spectator off balance.



Act pleased. After a moment, stop twirling so the hands are again as indicated in figure 40, left hand over the right hand. Close the left forefinger against the left thumb and simultaneously close the right forefinger against the right thumb. The result is shown in figure 41.

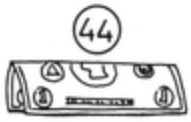
Bring the hands together as shown in figure 42. Unknown to the audience, the right forefinger touches the left thumb, and the left forefinger touches the right thumb. It seems a small point, but it is the key to success. Open the hands as in figure 43. The rubber band will drop free. Immediately separate the hands.

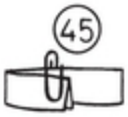


This last trick will be the only one the spectators can clearly remember. But although they have seen a simple trick, they find a solution curiously illusive. If they try to duplicate the feat, they find it impossible. Most give up eventually, claiming they were duped by hypnosis.

Flying Clipper

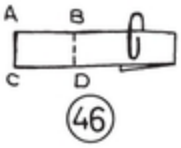
This mini-routine of three tricks uses dollar bills. The first trick is a completely baffling stunt with a single dollar bill and two paper clips. It is one of those tricks in which, even though you may know *how* it's done, you don't actually know *why* it works. It was introduced to magic by Bill Bowman.

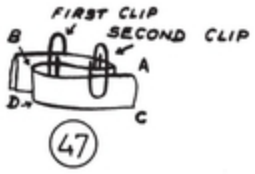




First fold a dollar bill in half lengthwise, as in figure 44. With the crease at top, fold the left third over to the right. Then slip a paper clip over the bill to hold the folded portion in place. The long loop of the paper clip should be on top, as shown in figure 45.

Turn the clipped bill over side-for-side from right to left, to the position shown in figure 46. Fold section ABCD over to the right to form a crease at BD. Then slip a second paper clip over the two uppermost horizontal folds, keeping the long side of the clip uppermost, as shown in figure 47.

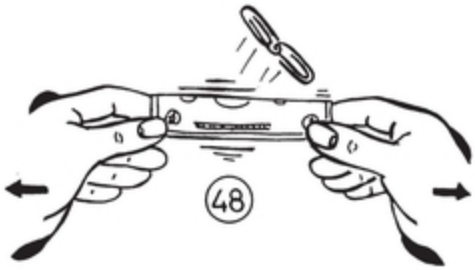




All of this is done openly in front of the spectator. Now grasp an end of the bill in each hand. Explain that you are going to draw the ends sharply apart. The paper clips will fly off the bill and land on the table. You bet the spectator that the paper clips will land within 2” of one another.

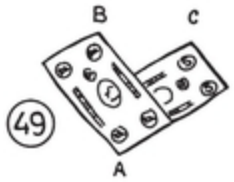
It is permissible to say this rather smugly, because it appears obviously impossible to control the flight of the paper clips so they will land so close together. By acting smug, you encourage your opposite number to bet. On the other hand, it is wise from an ethical standpoint to make this a no-money wager, because you *cannot* lose.

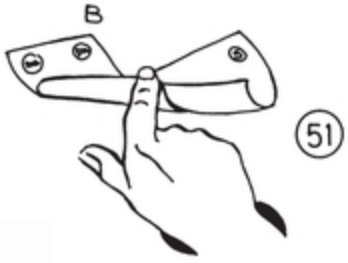
While the spectator watches, hold the ends of the bill firmly and pull them in opposite directions with a sharp motion (figure 48). The paper clips will fly into the air, and end up on the table if you’re careful. Not only are they within 2” of one another, *but they are linked together!*



Banked Roll

The one-dollar bill from the previous trick is kept, but the paper clips are put aside. In their place you use a five-dollar bill. Place the two bills on the table, the dollar on top of the five-spot, with two sides flush and at right angles to it, as shown in figure 49. Starting at the bottom corner (A), roll the bills together, rolling them up toward corner B. Under the cover provided by the right hand, allow corner C to slip under the roll. It will flip around and hit the right fingers, as shown in the exposed view in figure 50. Continue rolling the bills and then place a forefinger at their midpoint, to reach the situation in figure 51.





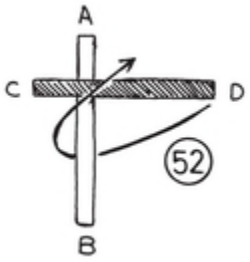
Have the spectator place his finger on corner B. Remind him that the one-dollar bill was on top of the five-dollar bill. Slowly unroll the two bills and show that now the five-dollar bill is on top of the one-dollar bill. The two bills have changed places.

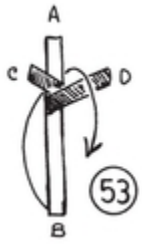
Passing the Buck

The above trick has appeared in print in one form or another, and it is remotely possible that someone in your audience will have a vague recollection of having seen the trick before. Always, a situation of this kind works to your advantage if you are able to apparently repeat the same trick, but with a radically different method. The following is just such a trick. It is Don Nielsen's handling of an idea of Ed Tabor's.

Using the one-dollar bill and five-dollar bill from the previous trick, fold each in half lengthwise. Place the five-dollar bill over the dollar at right angles, as shown in figure 52. As you do, patter that you will repeat "Banked Roll," but without the business of rolling up the bills.

Fold end D of the five-spot under the point of intersection, and then back up around the one-dollar bill toward its original position again, following the direction of the arrow in figure 52. This will bring you to the position indicated in figure 53.





Now fold end B of the single under the point of intersection, over the right arm of the five, and back toward its original position, this time following the arrow in figure 53. You're now at the position shown in figure 54. All you've done, in the fairest possible manner, is twist the two bills around one another.

Place end C with end D and let the spectator hold these two ends of the five-dollar bill together. Place end A with end B of the single and hold these with your right hand. Place your left forefinger on the center of the intertwined bills to keep them in place on the table.

Patter that everyone has heard the term "passing the buck." Then explain that you will try to pass the buck — that is, the dollar bill — right

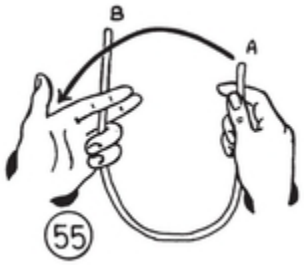
through the five-dollar bill. Slowly and gently pull on the dollar bill and it will seem to melt through the five-dollar bill.

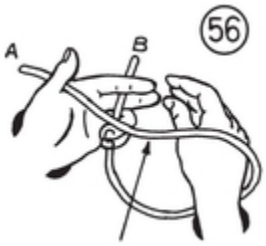
Not a Knot

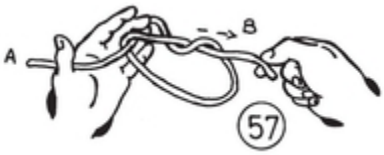
These next three tricks use just a piece of string. The string should be about 36” long. In this first routine you form a knot in the center of the string. Ask a spectator to grab the knot before you can pull it tight. He grabs the center of the string and finds to his surprise that the knot has completely vanished.

The knot is really a false knot — the term *false knot* being magical shorthand for a knot that looks absolutely genuine but in fact is not a knot at all. There are dozens of them, from the very simple slip knots to complex variations on what is called the *Chefalo knot,* but the knot described next is one of the most deceptive.

Hold the string as indicated in figure 55. Place end A into the crease of the left thumb and hold it in place by nipping it with the left thumb. The right hand now reaches through the loop thus formed, as shown in figure 56, and grasps end B. At the same time, the left middle fingers release their grip on strand B and nip the string at the point indicated by the arrow in figure 56. The right hand pulls end B down to the position indicated in figure 57.





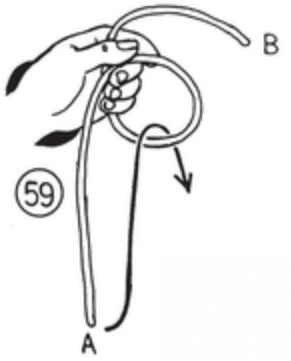


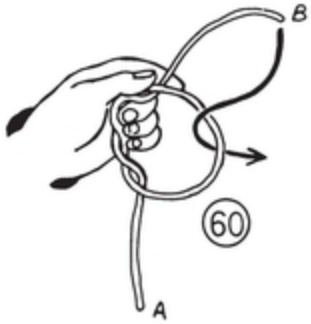
As you continue to pull end B slowly back toward you, ask the spectator to grasp the knot before you get a chance to completely tighten it. He grabs the center of the string just as you pull your hands apart (figure 58). He will let go of the string with a look of surprise, because the knot has completely vanished.

Subtract a Knot

A bewildering follow-up to the previous trick — one in which a more complex knot dissolves in thin air — this is a slightly simplified handling of a sequence worked out by Joseph Fries and Elmer Applegit.

The string is held in the left hand. A loop is formed as indicated in figure 59. The left thumb holds the loop firmly in place at the point of crossing. Now end A is taken with the right hand and passed through the loop, as shown by the arrow in figure 59. This forms the apparent knot shown in figure 60. You now make the knot more complex by passing end B through the loop, as shown by the arrow in figure 60.





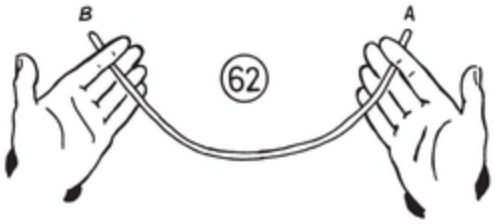
This time you hold the center of the string and let the spectator pull the ends until the string is taut (figure 61). Pretend to pluck the knot off the string and toss it into the air. The knot seems to vanish in midair.

Hunter's Impossible Knot

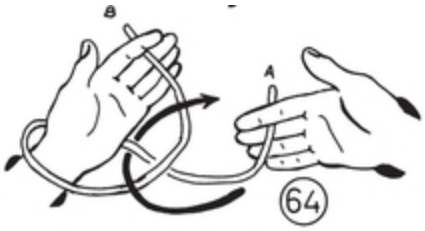
The finish of this mini-series of magical knots is a method of tying a knot in a piece of string without letting go of the ends. It is based on an idea of the British magician G. W. Hunter.

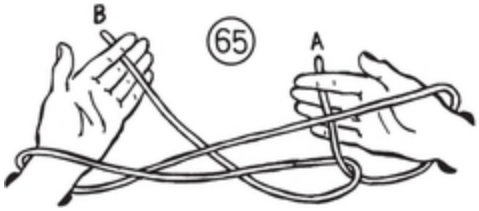
Hold the string between the hands as shown in figure 62. Make it clear that you will attempt the impossible, a way of tying a knot in a piece of

string without letting go of the ends at any time. Tell the audience to watch you closely.



Bring end A in your right hand over the left wrist (figure 63) and then around under the back of the left hand to the position shown in figure 64. Then bring end A through the loop shown, and following the arrow as indicated in figure 64, bring end A back to the right, to the position shown in figure 65.



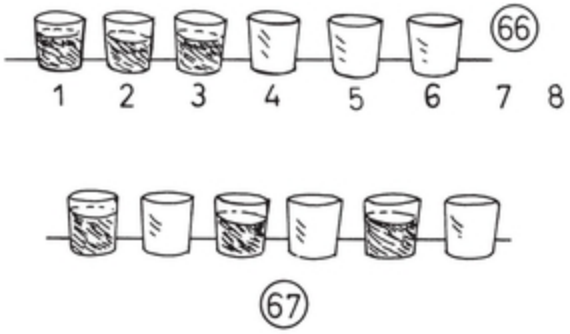


Say: “Right here — to be disgustingly honest about it — people accuse me of doing some fast sleight of hand to get a knot in the string. Just to satisfy you that I’ve been as honest as possible, and to convince you that the knot has already been formed, I’m not going to move my hands. Take the ends of the string and draw them out yourself.”

A spectator facing you takes the ends of the string. He draws the ends apart and, as a rule, can’t believe his eyes when he sees a genuine knot form in the center of the string.

All in a Row

This next series of three tricks uses ordinary drinking glasses. The first trick is really a stunt or a puzzle, but with a brilliant catch to it. Line up six glasses in a row and fill the first three with water or a soft drink (figure 66). The problem is to move a glass at a time, making no more than three moves and moving each individual glass no more than once, to arrive at the situation shown in figure 67—that is, so the glasses of liquid alternate with the empty glasses.



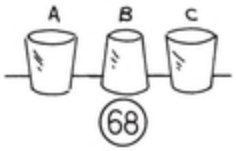
The problem seems reasonable enough, so the spectator will be encouraged to try different combinations. You even help him along by demonstrating a solution of sorts in the following way. Move the glass at position 3 (figure 66) to the vacant position 7. Then move the glass at position 5 to position 8. Finally move the glass at position 1 to position 5. This solution is not valid, because there is a vacant spot at position 3. The glasses *must* end up in a row with no vacant spots between them to satisfy the original conditions.

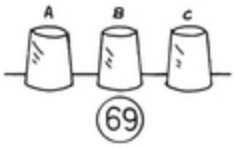
Having seen an approximate solution, the spectator will be encouraged to work on the problem. Chances are excellent he will fail utterly to arrive at the situation in figure 67 in three or fewer moves.

The secret is that only one move is required. Pick up the glass at position 2, pour its content into the empty glass at position 5, then return the now-empty glass to position 2. True, the spectator will curse you for springing a trick solution on him, but you immediately offer to placate him with the following bit of chicanery. It is just as underhanded as the swindle just completed, but it *looks* fair.

Three Tumblers

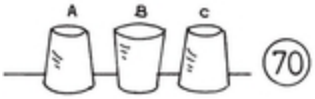
If you've just finished performing "All in a Row," put aside the three glasses containing liquid and concentrate attention on the three empty tumblers. Arrange them with the center glass (B) mouth down, as in figure 68. The problem is to grasp two glasses at a time and invert them, perform this action with three pairs of glasses, and end up, as shown in figure 69, with all glasses mouth downwards.





This time you demonstrate the method before the spectator tries it, so he can clearly see that no fraud is involved. Grasp glasses A and B, one in each hand, and turn them over. Then cross your arms, grasp glass A with the right hand and glass C with the left hand, and turn these two glasses over. Finally, grasp glass A with the left hand and glass B with the right hand. Turn these two glasses over and stop. All three glasses will be mouth down, as indicated in figure 69.

It is now the spectator's turn. Turn the center glass (B) over so you match the positions in figure 70. Repeat the conditions: in three moves, turning over a pair of glasses on each move, the spectator must cause all three glasses to turn mouth down, just as you did.



It may seem easy, but it's impossible. The spectator cannot end up with three mouth-up glasses in three moves, because *his* starting position is different from yours. When you turned the center glass over to arrive at the positions shown in figure 70, you set the glasses exactly opposite to the starting position you used. As proof, simply compare the spectator's starting position in figure 70 with your starting position in figure 68 and you will see the difference.

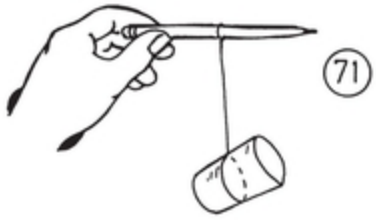
This switch may seem obvious because it has been pointed out with illustrations. But the spectator has no reference point except a faulty memory that can't quite reconstruct exactly how the starting position looked. So, while you appear to be showing him a very simple puzzle, you are leading him down a well-trod garden path.

Spirit Music

You have just performed two stunts using glasses, stunts that were essentially puzzles. It is time to present something with an ordinary drinking glass that smacks of genuine magic.

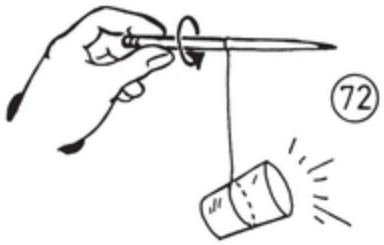
One glass is used, plus a string and a pencil. Tie one end of the string around the center of the glass. While you do this, have a spectator jot down the name of a famous musical composer on a piece of paper and crumple up the paper.

Take back the pencil from him and tie the loose end of the string around the center of the pencil. Then lift the pencil so that the glass is suspended in the air (figure 71).



Have the spectator concentrate on the name of the composer. Tell him to place his ear near the mouth of the glass. In time, perhaps a minute or so, he will begin to hear strange ethereal music from inside the glass, as if the composer were communicating through the medium of music from the spirit world. It is an uncanny experience to hear wisps of music in this manner and the trick smacks of genuine spirit manifestation.

Method: While the spectator's attention is directed at the glass, you twist the pencil as indicated in figure 72. By turning the pencil imperceptibly, you set up vibrations in the string which are transmitted to the glass. The faint tinkling sound that is heard from inside the glass is really the sound of the glass vibrating. The flared shape of the glass serves to amplify the sound much the same way a megaphone concentrates and amplifies sound. The interior of the glass also sets up a slight echo effect, which adds to the illusion.



Presentation: In terms of mechanics this is all you need know to do the trick, but to properly present it you must keep a few basic facts in mind. Any feat that smacks of spirit manifestations will probably be taken seriously by the audience. Thus you must play the part, act serious, and direct all attention to the proper mood.

Thus you begin by asking the spectator if he likes music, what kind he enjoys most, his favorite composer, and so on. Obviously the composer

can no longer be alive. This means that the spectator will choose a famous but long deceased composer like Beethoven or Bach. This works to your advantage in two ways. First, it relieves you of the task of trying to duplicate contemporary music with such crude implements as a glass, a string, and a pencil. Second, few people are completely skeptical on the subject of psychic phenomena, so any manifestations you produce will convince them that you have indeed established contact with the world beyond.

Remember to act serious; don't let anything happen for a minute or two; pretend you're not sure the demonstration will work at all; ask the spectator to concentrate harder; and when the odd, eerie sound is heard from inside the glass, he will likely jump out of his chair.

Drop Out

The following are five easy tricks in which ordinary dice are the only apparatus used. Dice are available in stationery and department stores. For this series of tricks you will need three dice.

The first effect is to hold three dice as shown in figure 73. The problem is to cause the center die to drop onto the table, without the other two dice falling out of the hand. Anyone who tries it is likely to fail since the moment pressure is slightly released, two dice (or all three) will tumble to the table.

The secret is this. While attention is directed to the spectator's efforts at solving the problem, secretly moisten the thumb and first finger. This is easy to do at a party because cold drinks are usually handy, and moisture condenses around the outside of glasses containing cold drinks. Simply by

picking up such a glass and casually putting it aside, you will cause moisture to transfer from the glass to your thumb and forefinger.

The trick now becomes easy. Grasping the row of three dice as in figure 73, grip them firmly, then relax pressure. The end dice will stick to the thumb and forefinger while the center die falls to the table. As soon as the center die falls free of the other two, apply pressure again so the two dice in hand are brought together.

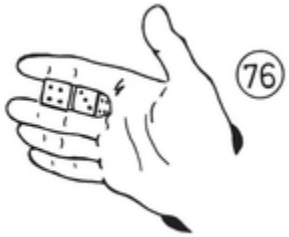
As a teaser — it is possible to do the same trick with five dice, causing just the center die to fall to the table, without the other four dice falling. There are no gimmicks, and no trick wording in the statement of the problem or its solution. The reader may wish to try his hand at solving this variation of the die problem.

Jumping Dice

Have a spectator extend his hand, palm down. Pick up two dice with your right hand and hold them clipped palm down between the forefinger and middle finger, with the exposed faces as shown in figure 74. Point out that the die with the 3-face showing is on the left and the die with the 4-face showing is on the right.

Now move your right hand over the spectator's fingers, around his fingertips, to the palm-up position under the spectator's hand shown in figure 75. Remind the spectator that the die with the 3-face showing is on the left. Then have him take his hand away.

Although you have not altered the dice in any way, the spectator will find that the dice have changed places. The die with the 3-face is now on the right (figure 76).



Method: Actually there is no more to this trick than what has been already explained. The two dice will apparently change places when the right hand goes from the palm-down position of figure 74 to the palm-up position of figure 76.

Balancing Act

Secretly moisten the 1-face of a die. Then place the 1-face of this die against the 1-face of another die and place both dice on top of a third die as shown in figure 77. The upper two dice appear to be balanced on top of the third die. It appears to be a reasonably logical situation until the spectator tries it. The two upper dice are removed, one with each hand. Remove the moisture from them just before you toss them to the spectator.

Although the miniature balancing act in figure 77 seems easily possible to duplicate, the spectator will find it impossible. When he gives up, tell him that it's all in the mind's ability to control small objects like dice. He may be skeptical, but you prove it with the following demonstration.

Mental Dice

In adding together the top face-values of two dice, it is well known that 7 can be made in more ways than any other number. There are six ways to make a 7. The next best roll is either a 6 or an 8; either total can be made in any one of five ways.

There is nothing false about the above statements. The spectator can list the various possibilities himself. Tell him that he will roll the dice. He can use any two ordinary dice. But even though he rolls the dice and handles them from start to finish, you will try with your mind to cause a 6 *and* an 8 to come up on the dice before he can roll two 7s.

It seems a sure thing for the spectator, and occasionally he will actually win because mind control is not perfect. But surprisingly, even though you never touch the dice nor use gimmicks, you can mentally control the dice in such a way that a 6 and an 8 show up before two 7s.

Method: As in "Jumping Dice," there is no method. The stunt is automatic and falls under the heading of a betting paradox. Although it is indeed easier to roll a 7 than a 6 or an 8, it is *harder* to roll *two* 7s before you roll a 6 and an 8.

This is strictly a matter of the laws of probability and has nothing to do with mind control. But it is exactly because the trick is completely automatic that you strive to make it seem just the opposite. Build it up as a telepathic feat and the audience will accept it as such.

You have one thing going for you. The laws of probability are not "laws" in the sense that they are unbreakable. Occasionally the spectator will get lucky and roll two 7s before a 6 and an 8 show up. The fact that this does happen once in a while only adds to the realism of the experiment. If it were done with loaded dice, magnets, or sleight of hand,

it would work all the time. The fact that it doesn't heightens the apparent realism of your claimed powers. And the "fact" that you are able to defy the odds with mental prowess — the gambler's ultimate dream — adds an aura of glamor to what is otherwise an oddity in the tables of probability.

The Probable Outcome

Rolling three dice, the spectator arrives at a random number. The mentalist draws a large square on a blank sheet of paper to represent the face of a blank die. He concentrates, then writes a number in the square. It is the spectator's randomly arrived-at number.

The dice are ordinary, no questions are asked, there are no confederates, yet the test is infallible.

Method: Place three ordinary dice on the table. Then turn your back. Ask the spectator to roll the three dice several times to satisfy himself that they are not loaded.

When he's satisfied himself that the dice are ordinary, have him roll them again, note the value on the top face of each die, and add the three values together. He is directed to remember the total.

Then have him pick up any single die and add the number on the bottom face of this die to the remembered total. Finally, have him throw this die, note the new number rolled, and add this number to the total. Obviously the spectator has arrived at a grand total by a completely random means.

Tell him to remember the grand total. Then turn around, pick up a pad and pencil, and draw a large square on the pad. Explain that this square represents the face of a blank die.

You have no way of knowing which of the three dice was given the extra roll, but it doesn't matter. Glance at the uppermost faces of the three dice. Mentally total them and add 7 to the result. The total you arrive at by this simple process is the same as the grand total remembered by the spectator.

Jot it down in the center of the square and place the pencil aside. Ask the spectator to announce the grand total aloud. When he does, shake your

head as if you were wrong. Then glance at the pad again, turn it around, and show that you correctly guessed the total.

Concluding Notes

Closeup magic is such a vast field that it is not possible to cover it adequately in a chapter as brief as this one. The goal in assembling the tricks and stunts for this chapter is to place before the reader simple yet puzzling routines that attract attention, amuse, bewilder, and sometimes astound the audience.

Most of the tricks use paper clips, rubber bands, string, and other objects easily carried in the pocket. In most cases you could also borrow the objects and proceed immediately with the routine in question. Routines are built up of three or more tricks and are so structured that you begin with a relatively lightweight item, and then go on to deeper mysteries using the same objects. Thus the audience is drawn in as the tricks become more and more mysterious. If they want more, you can move the heavy artillery up by drawing on the tricks in the following chapters.

If you're looking for an act that can be carried in a matchbox, it might easily be comprised of the tricks in this chapter. You'd choose different tricks for the stage of course, but for close-quarters work, the tricks in this chapter are an ideal starting point.

It must be emphasized that the above observations relate to the magic but not to the magician. Your approach should to a certain extent reflect your personality. This is another way of saying that you will get out of these routines what you put into them. Regarding most successful performers, it is virtually axiomatic that their personality is the act.

An optically illusive trick like "Mass Hypnosis" will appeal to the show-off, whereas "All in a Row" is attractive to the evil-minded individual who enjoys leading the mark into a well-concealed trap. "Flying Clipper" should be of interest to the low-key individual who enjoys presenting a perfectly logical sequence that has a perfectly illogical outcome. If you master all the tricks in this chapter and adapt them to your own style, you will gain a degree of self-confidence that comes with the

territory. By way of contrast, consider the case of Jack Dempsey, who when asked to entertain at a party replied: “Well, you know I can’t sing, I can’t dance, and I don’t tell jokes. But to show you I’m a good sport, I’ll fight any man in the house.”

4

Card Magic

At present card magic accounts for approximately 50 percent of the new literature on magic published each year. Interest in card magic, always high among magicians, has grown dramatically in the past quarter century. Card magic presents the student with so many diverse areas of study that it would require a lifetime to master the major topics. Research and classification — in a field of intense study and development for almost five hundred years — represents staggering problems to the historian of card magic. Happily, the field is so diverse that it constantly produces new and delightful ideas.

The card tricks in this chapter have been drawn almost exclusively from recently published literature on the subject and represent a collection of fresh, easy-to-do card effects that should go far to enhance your reputation as an expert card handler.

Easy as A-B-C

Very few tricks, with or without cards, are suitable for presentation before children, especially young children. The following routine can be performed before children or adults. It will surprise youngsters and amaze their parents.

The trick is what is called a *card location.* The basic form of the location is that someone selects a card and returns it to the deck. The face of the card is unseen by the magician, but using his magical powers, he finds the chosen card.

In “Easy as A-B-C” a full deck of 52 cards is used. While the magician turns his back, someone is asked to follow his instructions and remove a

small packet of cards from the deck. The volunteer counts these cards and then places them in his pocket. Now, using whatever number he counted, the volunteer is asked to count down to the card at that same position from the top of the deck, and to remember the card at that position.

For instance, if he pocketed 12 cards, he would count to and remember the twelfth card from the top of the remainder of the pack. Make sure he shows the chosen card to other spectators.

At this point the spectator has a small packet of cards in his pocket. He has chosen a card from the balance of the deck; the chosen card is at a position in the pack that corresponds with the number of cards in his pocket. The magician now turns around and faces the spectator.

Now the volunteer is asked if he remembers the alphabet. If so, he is requested to recite the alphabet aloud, at the same time transferring one card for each letter from the top of the deck to the bottom.

When he has gone through the complete alphabet, thank him and add that it was one of the most dramatic readings of the alphabet you've ever heard. Turn now to a second spectator. Ask this person to recite the alphabet in a mysterious manner. He is then given the deck. As he recites the alphabet a letter at a time (presumably in a deep, mysterious-seeming voice), have him also transfer a card at a time for each letter from the top to the bottom of the deck.

When he gets to the letter *z* he will have a card face down in his hand that corresponds to that letter. Ask for the name of the previously chosen card. It may be the Seven of Diamonds (7♦). The card corresponding to the letter *z* is then turned over and it happens to be the chosen card, the 7♦.

Method: There is none. Just follow the above procedure and you will always arrive at the chosen card on the letter z the second time through the alphabet.

Since the trick is self-working, it pays to make it seem harder than it really is. Point out that you never handle the deck, and that after the spectator pocketed a few cards, you did not know exactly how many cards remained in the deck.

For those who like to know why a trick works, a hint would be in order. The alphabet contains 26 letters, and in going through the alphabet twice you have gone through 52 letters. By a happy coincidence, a full deck of cards contains 52 cards. To discuss the rest of the analysis would take up too much space here, but curious readers should have no trouble filling in the details.

The trick is ideal to use with a youngster as your assistant. After the card is chosen as outlined above, hand the deck to your young assistant and have him reveal the card by going through the alphabet twice. If nothing else, the youngster will realize that the alphabet *does* serve some useful function after all.

The Yogi Knows

Tell the spectator that in the old days, when it was easier to get travel visas, you visited a famous yogi in Tibet. When asked how best to find a chosen card, he simply replied, “The Yogi Knows.” It took years, but you finally figured out what he meant.

Ask the spectator to shuffle the pack. Tell him to think of a number between one and ten and to remember the card at that position from the top of the deck. If he thought of the number 4, he would remember the fourth card from the top.

Turn your back while he chooses a card; then take the deck behind your back. Now turn and face the spectator. Holding the deck in your left hand, take the top card into your right hand. Take the next card on top of it, and continue taking single cards until you’ve taken 12 cards into the right hand. What you’ve done in fact is to reverse the order of the top 12 cards of the deck. Place this packet back atop the deck.

Place the deck face up on the table. “When the deck was behind my back I placed some cards on the bottom to mix them. What number did you think of?” The spectator might say 4. Deal 4 cards off the face into a face-up heap on the table. Then drop the balance of the deck onto the heap.

Ask if the spectator saw his card. He will say no. “Good. That means the cards are well mixed.” Turn the entire deck face down and place it in the

left hand. Say: “No one knows where your card is, and only you know what it looks like. But as I said earlier, ‘The Yogi Knows.’ ”

With the deck in the left hand, spell out, one by one, the letters in the words *The Yogi Knows*, dealing one card face down onto the table for each letter. After you’ve dealt the card corresponding to the last letter, turn over the next card and it will be the chosen card.

The principle behind the above trick is known as *placement* (since it secretly places an unknown chosen card twelfth from the top of the deck), and is a variation of an idea associated with Al Baker.

A Rare Find

This is a location effect in which one card is used to find another. Again a borrowed, shuffled deck is used. There is no counting and the deck need not be complete. Oddly, the secret of the trick is based on an optical illusion with cards, but before we get to that, here is the effect as seen by the audience:

From his own deck a spectator deals two cards face down onto the table. While the magician turns his back, the spectator looks at and remembers one of these cards. Then he mixes the two cards around so that even he doesn’t know which is which.

The two cards are next inserted at widely different points in the deck. The magician then takes the top card, say the 4♥, and inserts it into the deck, claiming that the 4♥ will migrate to a position directly adjacent to the spectator’s chosen card.

The spectator names his card. It may be the 2♣. The deck is spread, and the 4♥ is seen to be right next to the 2♣.

Method: Have the spectator spread the deck face down and remove any two cards, keeping them face down on the table so he doesn’t know the identity of either card yet.

While you turn your back, ask him to choose, look at, and remember one of the two cards. Then tell him to mix the two removed cards face

down on the table so that neither he nor anyone else in the room knows which of the two cards is the chosen one.

After he's done this, turn around so you face the spectator. Pick up the deck and fan it with the faces toward yourself. Pick up one of the two cards lying in front of the spectator and insert it into the deck adjacent to some card in the middle. Stick the card into the fan (or spread) so that it juts out to the left, as shown by the 2 ♦. in figure 78. (For clarity, the magician's hand has been omitted in figures 78-80.) The upjogged card is inserted to the immediate left of the 4 ♥.

Tell the spectator that you want to put his cards into two entirely different parts of the deck. Pick up the card remaining on the table. Insert it into the fan so that it goes in directly to the right of the 4 ♥, but angled to the far right, as shown by the 3 ♣ in figure 78.

All you've done is to place the cards on each side of the 4 ♥, but a peculiar optical illusion is at work here. From *your* point of view the two cards are obviously positioned on adjacent sides of the 4 ♥. But from the *spectator's* point of view (figure 79), the two cards are in entirely different parts of the deck. Credit for this subtle idea goes to Audley Walsh.

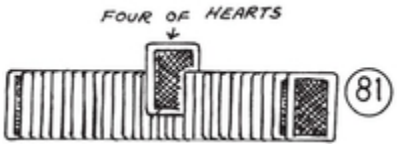
Push one of the two upjogged cards flush with the deck; then push the other upjogged card flush with the deck. Square up the deck and place it face down on the table. Take the top card off the deck, glance at it, and call

it the 4 ♥. Say, “I’m going to put the 4 ♥ in the middle of the deck, away from your two cards.”

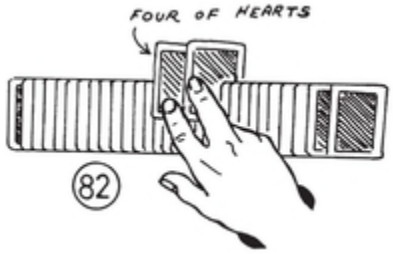
Insert the apparent 4 ♥ into the deck, somewhat lower in the deck than the position of the real 4 ♥. Of course, you do not show the apparent 4 ♥ to the spectator.

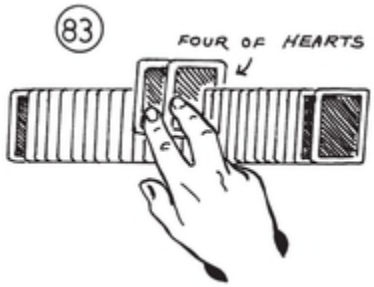
Explain that the 4 ♥ will instantly change position and jump to a new position right next to the chosen card. All the spectator has to do is name his card. When he does, take the deck, turn it so the faces are toward you, run through the cards and upjog the 4 ♥ when you come to it (figure 80), noting which card is immediately above it (2 ♦) and which is right below it (3 ♣).

Square the deck along the sides and bottom, turn it face down, and spread it from left to right on the table. The face-down, upjogged 4 ♥ is clearly visible, as indicated in figure 81.



Have the spectator name his card again. If he names the card above the 4 ♥, slide this card (2 ♦) and the 4 ♥ out of the spread (figure 82). If he names the card below the 4 ♥, then slide out this card (3 ♣) and the 4 ♥ (figure 83). Turn over the 4 ♥ so it is face up on the table. Have him turn over the other card to discover that it is indeed his card.





Fourcast

In this trick a spectator chooses two cards face down from a packet and the magician chooses two others. When the cards are turned over, they prove to be four of a kind.

Method: The trick requires a small setup, which is done prior to the presentation of the routine. From the top of the deck down 12 cards are set in the following order: 5-8-J(Jack)-5-8-J-5-8-J-5-8-J. In other words, a basic 5-8-J cycle is repeated four times.

The trick introduces a kind of *elimination shuffle* known as the *Down/Under Shuffle* and a variation. This shuffle has a number of useful properties which have been developed and exploited by magicians for some years. The shuffle has the virtue that although it is completely controlled, the shuffle *looks* random.

To present the trick, remove the deck from its case and deal off the top 12 cards. Act as if the number you deal is unimportant. When you've dealt 12 cards, say, "That should be enough."

Hand the face-down packet to the spectator. Tell him to transfer cards one at a time from top to bottom until he feels the impulse to stop. When

he has done this, tell him to place the top card of the packet in his pocket without looking at its face.

Following your instructions, he then performs the Down/Under shuffle: keeping the cards face down throughout, he places the *first* (top) card *down* onto the table, *then* places the next card *under* the packet, then the next card down on top of the first card on the table, then the next card under the packet, and so on, until he has a single card left in his hand. Have him place this face-down card into his pocket as he did with the card already there.

Take back the remainder of the packet. Remind the spectator that he began by transferring cards one at a time from top to bottom. You do the same, but you do not transfer a random number of cards. Instead, you transfer cards one at a time until you've transferred 5 cards from top to bottom. Then place the top card of the packet face down on the table in front of the spectator.

Perform an *Under/Down shuffle:* begin the shuffle this time by *first* placing a card *under* the deck, *then* one down onto the table, and so forth, until you have a single card remaining in your hand. Place this card face down on the table in front of the spectator, alongside the first card you placed there.

Have the spectator remove one of his pocketed cards and turn it face up. It may be a Jack. Then have him remove the other card. It too is a Jack. Congratulate him on achieving an amazing match, a one-in-a-million shot. Then have him turn up your two tabled cards — and they are also a pair of Jacks, for a stunning finish.

The Game of 7-16

The Under/Down shuffle just described can be used in a simple card game in which the magician not only guesses which player will win and which will lose, but he predicts the winning and losing cards ahead of time! The trick is Bill Taylor's handling of a concept of Alex Elmsley's.

Beforehand place the 5 ♥ eighth from the top of the deck and the 10 ♠ sixteenth from the top. Write a prediction on a slip of paper as follows:

“Dealer wins with the 10 ♠; player loses with the 5 ♥.” Fold the prediction and place it on the table.

To present the trick, hand the spectator the deck. Tell him you’d like to play a new Australian card game called “7-16.” It’s played in the bars down there, and you add, “I think it’s called 7-16 because the bars don’t open until 7:15 at night and it takes about a minute to pour the first drink.”

Rules of play in 7-16 are very simple. The spectator, acting the part of the dealer, deals the magician any number of cards between and 16 (that is, at least 8 but no more than 15). The cards are dealt face down, one on top of the other.

The dealer then deals himself the same number of cards.

Each party performs an Under/Down shuffle with the cards he has — beginning by placing the top card under the packet, the next card down onto the table, and so forth. The elimination shuffle is performed until each party has but one card. The person holding the highest card wins.

In order for the magician to get the 5❤ he already predicted, he must do the following. First he notes how many cards the dealer gives him. The number is between 7 and 16, so it must be 8 or higher. Taking whatever total number of cards he has been dealt, the magician mentally subtracts 8 from this number.

Whatever the result, he openly transfers that number of cards from the bottom to the top of his packet while the spectator is dealing himself his own hand. Thus, if dealt 10 cards, the magician would transfer 2 cards from bottom to top. The transfer can be made in a casual fashion, as if toying with the cards.

The Under/Down shuffle follows as soon as the spectator has dealt himself as many cards as he gave the magician. The spectator will find that his last card is the 10♠. The magician’s last card is the 5❤. When the prediction is opened, it correctly tells not only who won and lost, but also the exact card held by each player.

Color Flite

Two decks are used in this very strong effect. One deck is blue-backed and the other deck red-backed. Decks of contrasting colored backs can be picked up in most stationery stores. They are also sold in sets for the game of bridge.

In this routine a spectator chooses any card from the red deck, and another spectator chooses a card from the blue deck. The Joker is then removed from each deck. On command the red-backed Joker changes into the chosen red-backed card, and the blue-backed Joker changes into the chosen blue-backed card.

It is a startling visual trick done with two ordinary decks and no sleight of hand. The creation of Roy Walton, it illustrates perfect economy of means used to bring about a dramatic magical effect.

Method: A bit of beforehand preparation is the ingredient that does all the work for you. Remove each deck from its case. Place the blue-backed Joker face down on top of the face-down red-backed deck. Place the red-backed Joker face down on top of the blue-backed deck.

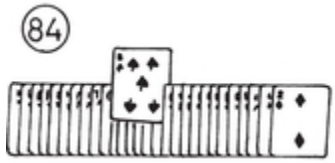
Now place the red deck (with the blue-backed Joker on top) into the blue card case, and place the blue deck (with the red-backed Joker on top) into the red card case. This completes the preparation. Drop the decks into your jacket pockets, one deck in each side pocket, and you are ready to perform the trick.

Presentation: When ready to perform, explain to your audience that you'd like to try an experiment in color perception. You further explain that recent experiments in color interactions have produced interesting results.

Remove the cased decks from the pocket. Ask a spectator to indicate either card case. Say he points to the blue case. Tell him: "Very well, we'll use this deck and have you pick a blue-backed card. Would you name any card in the deck." Say he names the 5♠.

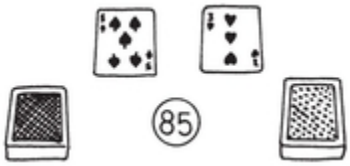
Open the card case and remove the apparent blue-backed deck. Actually this is the red deck with a blue-backed Joker on top. Be careful not to spread the cards. Keep them carefully squared.

Turn the pack face up and spread it on the table. When you find the 5♠, push it out of the spread (figure 84). Square up the deck, turn it face down, and place it on the table next to the blue card case.

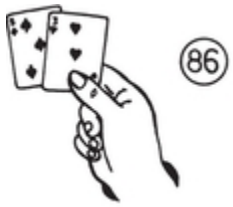


Now swing attention to a different spectator. Have him name another card. Say he names the 3♥. Tell him, “All right, we’ll remove the 3♥ from the red-backed pack.”

Follow the same procedure with the apparent red-backed deck that you did with the apparent blue-backed deck. At this point the situation will be as shown in figure 85.

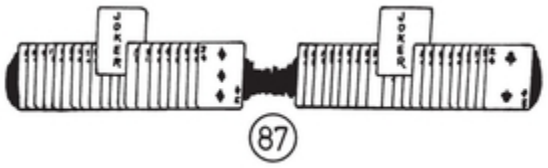


Pick up the two selected cards, keeping them face up, and display them in a slight spread (figure 86). Turn them face down together and toss them face down onto the table.



Pick up the red-backed card with your right hand. Your left hand steadies the apparent red deck from above while the right hand inserts the red-backed card into the deck. Say, “We’ll return the red-backed card to its own deck.” After you’ve done this, pick up the blue-backed card and similarly insert it into the apparent blue-backed deck.

Turn each deck face up and place each pack on the table. Cut each deck and complete the cut. Then spread each pack face up, find the Joker in each, and upjog the Jokers. The situation is shown in figure 87.



87

Say: “Here’s what I mean by color interaction. I’m going to place the Joker from the red-backed deck into the blue-backed deck and vice versa.” This you openly do, so that the Jokers are removed from their respective decks, exchanged, and returned to opposite decks.

Square up both decks. Give each another cut and complete the cut. Then spread each deck face down on the table. The odd-backed card in each pack will show up like a beacon.

Ask for the name of the blue-backed card chosen by the first spectator. He will name the 5♠. Remove the apparent blue-backed Joker from the red-backed deck, turn it face up and show that it has changed into the 5♠.

Ask for the name of the other chosen card. It will be the 3♥. Remove the supposed red-backed Joker from the blue-backed deck. Turn it face up and show that it has changed into the 3♥.

The Haunted Card

From any borrowed deck a spectator chooses three cards. Of these three cards, he narrows his choice to a single card. He signs the face of this card with a pencil and places it between the other two cards.

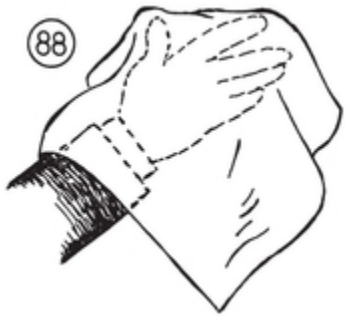
The deck is wrapped in a handkerchief. The three cards are placed in different parts of the deck. The magician takes the pencil from the spectator and waves it over the deck. “The pencil attracts only one card,” the magician says, “and that card will be the one you chose.”

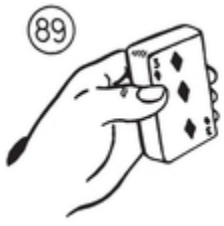
Slowly, one card rises out of the deck, and it is indeed the card chosen and signed by the spectator.

Method: Many people think that cards rise mysteriously out of the deck with the aid of threads or magnets. In the present trick the deck is borrowed and there are no gimmicks. Then how does the card mysteriously rise from the center of the deck? With the aid of something called the *plunger principle*, a self-contained method that does away with all gimmicks.

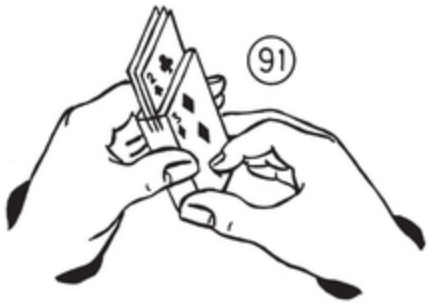
For the trick you will need the deck, a handkerchief, and a pencil. Have the deck shuffled by a spectator. Then take back the deck and spread the cards between your hands. Have three cards withdrawn. When the spectator has taken the three cards, place the deck on the table for a moment. Ask him to choose one of the three cards, initial the face of the chosen card, and place it between the other two.

Drape the handkerchief over your left hand as shown in figure 88. Place the deck into the left hand, holding it face forward by the sides as indicated in figure 89. (For clarity, the in-place handkerchief is not shown in figures 89—93.) Take the three cards from the spectator and insert them face forward, one at a time, in different parts of the deck; the three cards are upjogged from the deck, and the center card is the one chosen by the spectator (figure 90).

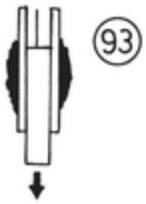




Now reach under the handkerchief and grasp the deck at the bottom with your right hand as in figure 91. Note that the right forefinger is curled against the face of the deck and applies slight pressure. The left forefinger is free to push the three upjogged cards down, flush with the deck.



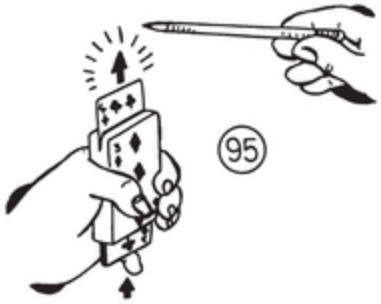
This is where the plunger principle comes into play. Figure 92 shows the three upjogged cards when they are still in an upjogged position. As they are pushed down flush with the deck, a packet of cards is automatically pushed down (or plunged) to the downjogged position shown in figure 93. (Figures 92 and 93 are, of course, side views of the deck, not visible to the audience.)



The plunger action is hidden by the handkerchief because the left fingers and thumb curl around the deck — the handkerchief curls around the deck with them — and the situation from the spectators' viewpoint is as indicated in figure 94. There is still a packet of cards plunged (or downjogged) at the center of the deck, but the handkerchief hides this condition.

The right hand now picks up the pencil used by the spectator to initial his card. Explain that the pencil exerts a strange influence over anything written with it. Wave the pencil over the deck.

At the same time the left little finger, positioned now under the downjogged packet, pushes up on it. The action is shown in the exposed view of figure 95. As the downjogged packet is slowly pushed flush with the deck, the chosen, signed card will rise slowly out of the top of the deck, as indicated in figure 95.



Two tips on the handling: You may not get the plunger action shown in figures 92 and 93 to work right away. There are a variety of factors that could interfere with a smooth working of this valuable principle; the cards may be soiled, or if they are plastic-coated, they may tend to stick or bind.

Usually such obstacles can be overcome simply by applying proper pressure with the right hand as it holds the deck as in figure 91.

The second tip has to do with misdirection. The trick is simple, requiring no gimmicks, so the audience tends to think that perhaps the secret somehow lies in the cards. To distract their attention, buy an ornate, exotic-looking pen or pencil that you claim has mystic powers, and use it as a wand in figure 95. Attention is now directed at the pencil, so the desired goal is achieved.

This handling of the rising cards is the author's version of artist-magician Joseph Schmidt's impromptu card rise.

Flash Aces

Briefly, the effect is this: The spectator shuffles the deck and snaps a rubber band around its center. A handkerchief is spread out on the table. The magician takes the banded deck and slaps it against the center of the handkerchief. Instantly the four Aces pop out of the *center* of the banded deck (figure 96). It is a sudden, surprising four-Ace production.

Method and Presentation: Beforehand, remove the four Aces from the deck and place them together in a packet in your left jacket pocket. The backs of the Aces are closest to the body. In the right jacket pocket place a folded handkerchief.

The rubber band must fit around the deck snugly. It is wise to experiment with several different rubber bands and to pick the one that consistently gives the best results. The time taken to do this is a small investment in terms of the ultimate effect achieved.

After performing some other card trick, ask the spectator to shuffle the cards. Then remove the rubber band from your pocket and have him snap the rubber band around the deck.

Take the banded deck and hold it face down in your left hand, as shown in figure 97. Then say, “I’ll also need a handkerchief.” Here is where the misdirection comes into play. The left hand goes into the left jacket pocket. The right hand simultaneously goes into the right jacket pocket. As far as the audience is concerned the action of both hands going into the pockets is natural, because you are looking for a handkerchief and don’t remember which pocket it’s in.

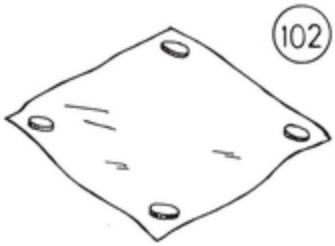
Two things occur at the same time. When the left hand goes into the left pocket, it adds the four Aces in a reversed direction to the bottom (face) of the deck. The Aces are held in place across the middle by the left thumb, as shown in figure 98. The left hand then comes out of the pocket, still holding the deck face down, as indicated in figure 99. Simultaneously the right hand comes out of the right jacket pocket with the handkerchief.

The actual direction of the cards at this point, omitting the rubber band momentarily, is shown in figure 100. (This is an exposed view; the deck actually remains squared up and face down, as in figure 99.) The position of the rubber band around the deck — again with the Aces exposed for the sake of illustration — is shown in figure 101. Place the face-down banded deck on the table, taking care not to reveal the loose face-up Aces on the bottom of the pack.

100

101

Both hands are now free to take the handkerchief and spread it out on the table. Tell the spectators that the handkerchief represents the playing surface used in a nefarious card game some years ago. If you have a few poker chips handy, place one at each corner of the handkerchief, as shown in figure 102. None of this “hanky-panky” is necessary — it has nothing to do with the working of the trick — but it lends atmosphere to the effect.



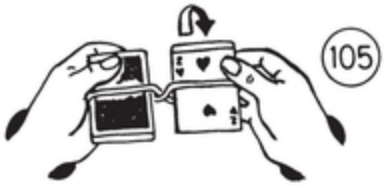
102

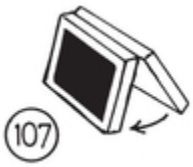
Tell the audience: “A rubber band was placed around the deck to keep people from cheating. The object of this game was to cut to the Aces. The first player who could do so would be the winner.”

To illustrate how each player cut the deck, the magician picks up the banded deck (and the concealed Aces underneath) with his right hand and

places it face down in his left palm. The right hand then grasps the upper half of the deck lengthwise and draws it halfway to the right, as shown in figure 103. The left thumb then clamps the upper packet in place while the right hand releases its grip and then regrips the upper packet in a palm-down condition (figure 104).

The right hand pulls the upper packet to the right, clear of the lower packet, then turns the upper packet end-for-end (figure 105). This reveals a card that obviously isn't an Ace. Tell the audience, "Each player cut the deck, but no one cut to an Ace." The upper packet is now apparently replaced on the bottom of the deck. Actually it is hinged — or pivoted bookwise — as it goes onto the bottom of the deck (figure 106). Figure 107 shows the action with the hands and rubber band removed for clarity.





Say: “Then one player, who had been rather quiet all evening, and who was known only as ‘The Kid,’ said that he could cut to all four Aces — even with a rubber band around the deck. Naturally the other players bet against him.”

Hold the deck at the sides with the left hand, as shown in figure 108. Then drop or slap the deck down onto the center of the handkerchief. The pack will seem to cut itself at the Aces, causing them to pop out of the center in a face-up condition (figure 96).

The basic principle of this trick is associated with Charles Jordan. The variation just described was worked out by Joseph Schmidt and the author. It is one of the strongest possible and most visual methods of revealing the Aces, since the end result cannot be accounted for by the handling as seen by the audience. As *they* saw it, a spectator shuffled the deck and snapped a rubber band around it. The deck then suddenly cut itself, causing all four Aces to pop out of the center in a face-up condition.

The Miracle Discovery

The principle of this excellent mystery is associated with gambling techniques. Its application to a magic trick allows you to present the audience with a seemingly unexplainable mystery.

Have any deck shuffled. Take the deck and hold it by the sides from above in your left hand, as shown in figure 108. Ask a spectator to remove a packet of cards from the center of the deck, as shown in figure 109. After

the spectator has removed a packet, leave the gap in the deck where the packet was removed, as indicated in figure 110, so that the spectator can later return the packet to its original position in the deck.

Have the spectator shuffle his small packet. Then, while you turn your back, ask him to note the top card of the packet and return it to the top of the packet. He then slides the packet back into the gap in the deck where the packet originally came from. Finally, he takes the deck from you, carefully squares it up, and may even cut it a few times if he likes.

Under these rather severe conditions you succeed in locating the chosen card.

Method: The trick depends on a gambler’s method of secretly peeking at a card. The peeked-at card is used as a locator, and this card in turn tells you the location of the spectator’s chosen card.

Hold the deck in the left hand as in figure 108. Tell the spectator to remove a small packet from the center (figure 109). Leave a gap in the deck (figure 110), as already explained.

Tell the spectator to shuffle his packet and look at the top card. The way you do this is important because the words must logically tie in with the action. First tell him to shuffle the packet. When he’s done this, tell him to look at the top card of the packet. When you say “the top card,” point to it with the left forefinger (figure 111). This allows you to glimpse the face

card of the upper packet in the left hand. In figure 111 you would glimpse the index corner of the 4♥. The 4♥ then becomes your key card.

After the spectator has looked at the top card of his packet, tell him to slide his packet back into its original place in the deck. When he's done this, immediately hand him the deck. Tell him to square it up, give it a cut, and complete the cut.

The revelation should be dramatic: Take back the deck and drop it into your side jacket pocket. Tell the spectator that you will remove cards one at a time until you come to his card. Add that you will remove cards at random from different parts of the deck. This makes the trick seem harder. In fact the trick would be impossible if you did it this way, so you only say you are going to do it this way. What you actually do is remove cards sequentially from the top of the deck, bring them out one at a time, and toss them face up onto the table. When you've removed the 4♥, you know that the next card is the spectator's card.

The hand goes into the pocket and grasps the spectator's card. Pause for dramatic effect. Remove the card, but don't show its face. Ask the spectator to name his card. Then turn over the card in hand to show you've located his card under impossible conditions. This very effective presentation was devised by J. W. Sarles.

There is a remote chance that when the spectator cuts the deck and completes the cut, he will cut the key card to the bottom of the deck. To protect yourself in this situation, glance at the bottom card of the deck as you place it in the jacket pocket. If you spot the key card on the bottom of the deck, you know the chosen card is on the top.

With the deck in the pocket, remove cards from the *bottom,* one at a time, and toss them out face down onto the table without looking at them. After you've removed six or seven cards, pause for dramatic effect, then say, "I think the next card is yours." Reach into the jacket pocket, remove the *top* card of the deck, and toss it out to the spectator.

Concluding Observations

While you may have been unaware of it while trying out the material in this chapter, the tricks are arranged so that the easiest are first. As you progress through the chapter, the tricks require more in the way of proper handling. Thus, a trick like "Easy as A-B-C" is self-working, whereas a trick like "Flash Aces" requires attention to detail.

Don't worry about the degree of dexterity involved. When you learned, at a very early age, to tie your shoes, you were learning something that required a very high degree of manual dexterity and coordination. By comparison, the tricks in this chapter are child's play.

This chapter introduces the reader to key cards, placements, the plunger principle, the Down/Under shuffle, and other techniques used by magicians. Playing cards are almost always available and they can be used in many different contexts. You will find them used later on in the chapters on mental magic and gambling. The tricks in this chapter were chosen because they require no special ability or props, and the secrets are well hidden and almost automatic. This allows you to devote most of your time to presenting these effects in the most dramatic way possible. Emphasize their strong points and the tricks will look miraculous.

5

Coin Magic

Coins, like cards, are everyday objects easily available for the performance of magical effects. Unlike cards, they are not closely associated with magic and are less familiar in this context to the general public. This works to the magician's advantage — not expecting trickery with coins, spectators are that much more surprised when something mysterious occurs.

Also, since coins are part of everyday life, they lend themselves to patter stories about balancing the budget, paying one's taxes, trying to make ends meet, the rising cost of everything, and so on.

Change in Mind

This is a mental trick with coins, easy to do, and a logical lead-in to the next trick. It is only necessary that you have a larger-than-average number of pennies in your pocket. We'll assume that most people carry around 6 or 7 pennies. Thus, to be on the safe side, you should carry about 15 pennies.

Remove the change from your pocket. Cup it in your hand so that the spectator can't see the change. Then take away all of the nickels, dimes, and quarters and pocket them. This leaves just the pennies in your hand. Close the hand into a fist.

Say to the spectator, "I'll bet you I have as many pennies as you have, plus three more, plus enough left over to make exactly fifteen pennies."

The spectator counts the number of pennies he has in his pocket. You check the count against his. He might have 7. Show him that you too have

7, plus 3 more, plus enough more (in this case 5) to make exactly 15.

It looks like mind reading and the spectator will later swear that you somehow knew how much change (not just pennies but all the change) he had in his pocket. In fact, the trick works itself. Just follow the instructions given above and you will always bring the trick to a successful ending.

Heads or Tails

The last trick left you with a handful of pennies. Here's a fine follow-up routine. Drop eight pennies into a spectator's cupped palm. The spectator places his other hand over the coins, shakes the coins around, and dumps them onto the table.

The magician then explains that when he turns his back, the spectator is to decide on two coins and turn them both over. He then decides on two more coins and turns both of them over. He repeats this process as often as he likes, as silently as possible. Each time he can turn any two coins over. When he's finished, he tells the magician that he's satisfied that the coins are well mixed. The magician then asks him to decide on any coin, remember whether it's heads up or tails up, and cover it with his hand.

When this has been done, the magician turns around and immediately announces whether the covered coin is heads up or tails up. It may seem like luck, but in fact the magician can repeat the trick as often as the spectator requires to prove that no luck is involved.

Method: As far as I'm aware, the basic effect in this trick originated with L. Vosburgh Lyons. The *parity principle* involved here is associated with Bob Hummer, but the ingenious combination that produces the effect is the work of Al Thatcher.

At the beginning of the trick, when the spectator has mixed up the eight coins and dumped them out onto the table, simply note whether there are an even or an odd number of heads showing. Then turn your back.

Have the spectator pick up two coins and turn them over. He turns over pairs of coins until he's satisfied they are well mixed. Then instruct him to choose a penny and cover it with his hand.

Turn around and mentally count the number of heads on the seven pennies still showing. The secret comes into play at this point. If there were an even number of heads at the beginning and there are an even number showing now, the spectator did not choose a head. Ergo, the coin hidden under his hand has tails showing.

Likewise, if there were an odd number of heads showing at the start, and there are an odd number showing now, the spectator also did not pick a head. Again you know that the coin under his hand has tails showing.

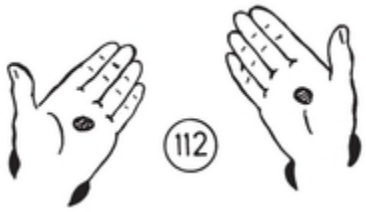
But if you started with an even number of heads and now have an odd number, the spectator's chosen coin has heads showing. Likewise, if you started with an odd number of heads and have an even number at the finish, the spectator chose heads.

To sum up, if the parity of the number of heads remains the same before and after the spectator has chosen a coin, the chosen coin has tails showing. If the parity changes from even to odd or vice versa, the chosen coin has heads showing.

Invisible Pockets

The magician patters about having once purchased a shirt that had no pockets. Even more confusing, when he put a coin in one invisible pocket, it ended up in another. He demonstrates this with a coin that hops from right to left, and then disappears altogether.

Method and Presentation: This trick combines two well-known principles. Start with a penny in each hand. Display them as shown in figure 112. Patter about the fact that you once bought a shirt at an amazingly low price. You found out that the low price was due to the fact that the shirt had invisible pockets.

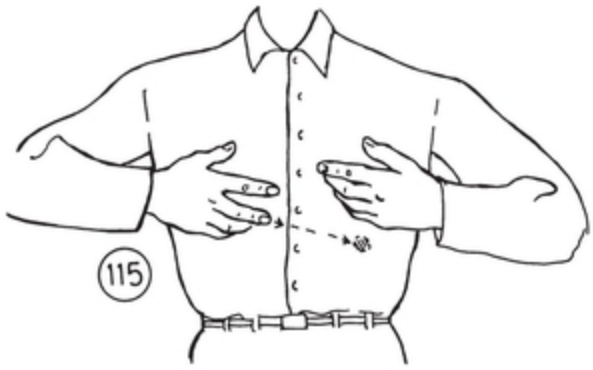


“You could put a coin in each pocket,” you say. At the same time slap the hands against the sides of the chest as shown in figure 113. Secretly release the coin from the right hand so that it flies into the left hand, as shown by the arrow in figure 113. The coin jumps from hand to hand so fast that the audience never sees it go. They think each hand contains a penny at this point.

“Not only were the pockets invisible, but they must have been connected through the fourth dimension. If I put a coin in the invisible pocket on my right . . .” Pause here, then open the right hand to show it empty. Finish the phrase as you bring the contents of the left hand into view (figure 114): “. . . both coins would end up in the pocket on my left.”

Now place one coin into your trouser pocket. Toss the other coin from the left hand to the right hand, back to the left, and finally back to the

right. “I got used to that eventually, but I never realized . . .” Here you slap the hands against the sides of the chest, but this time you allow the coin to shoot from the right hand *into* the shirt through the opening at its front, as shown in figure 115. Finish the sentence with: “. . . that invisible pockets could get invisible holes in them.” Again pause for dramatic effect. Open the right hand and show it empty.



Thus far the trick looks just like it did the first time. The audience will assume the coin somehow got into your left hand. They may even be on the verge of formulating theories as to how the coin jumps into the left hand. But you demolish all theories by showing the left hand empty too as you say, “Eventually I lost so much money I stopped wearing the shirt.”

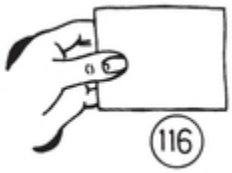
A word of encouragement here. You may find at the start that you cannot achieve absolute control over the secret flight of the coin from right hand to the left hand. Even more difficult is the maneuver of directing the coin into the shirt. You may find it easier to unbutton a shirt button to make the coin’s secret passage into the shirt easier. But you will find that if you keep at it the knack will come and you will be rewarded with a very strong closeup trick.

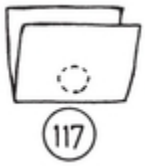
Coin Stabbing

A dramatic method of vanishing and recovering a borrowed coin, this trick also introduces a basic principle of coin magic — what is known as the *coin fold.*

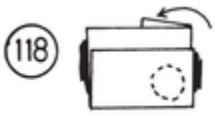
As seen by your audience, a borrowed coin is marked and folded into a piece of paper. The coin vanishes in a dramatic manner and is later found in the magician's pocket. All props are borrowed, marked by the spectator, and left with him at the finish of the trick.

Method: The key to the vanish of the borrowed, marked coin is the coin fold, so that will be described first. Use a piece of paper measuring about 4" by 6". Hold the paper in your left hand, as shown in figure 116. With your right hand, fold the bottom edge of the paper up over your left thumb, to a position ¾" from the top edge and parallel to it. Pinch the fold into a crease along the bottom, creating a ¾"-wide open flap along the top. Have a coin marked and then drop the coin into the crease. The situation at this point is indicated (with the hands omitted) in figure 117.





Fold and crease the right third of the paper backward toward the left (figure 118), then fold back and crease the left third toward the right (figure 119). Finally, fold the top flap down toward the back, in the direction of the arrow in figure 120. The audience thinks the coin is safely sealed inside the folded paper. Not true.



Ask someone with a firm grip to hold a knife upright, as shown in figure 121. Mumble something in Latin. Gaze at the knife. Transfer the folded package to the right hand. The left hand lightly and gingerly tests the point of the knife blade for sharpness, creating sufficient misdirection for the right hand, holding the folded package, to tip slightly. The coin will fall out, as shown in figure 122; this happens secretly and automatically as a result of the open pocket created during the coin fold.

Now take the folded package by the sides — thumb on one side, first and second finger clipping the package on the other — leaving the center exposed. With a sudden but carefully aimed downward motion, impale the package on the knife blade (figure 123). Since the audience thought the coin was inside the package, the sight of the package impaled on the blade of the knife is dramatic confirmation that there is mystery afoot.

Have the spectator remove the package from the knife blade and open it. While attention is on him, allow your right hand to drop the coin unobtrusively into your right trouser pocket. If your left side is to the audience and all attention is on the spectator, no one will see your right hand slip momentarily into the right pocket.

When the spectator opens the package and finds that the coin has vanished, show your hands empty, reach into your pocket, remove a handful of change, find the spectator's marked coin, and return it to him.

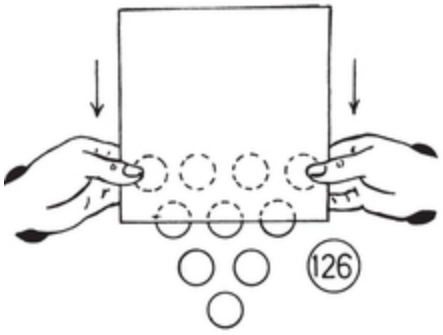
Turnabout

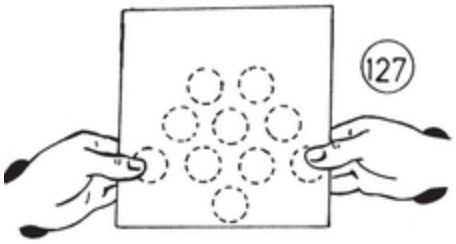
This clever mystery is the invention of the distinguished writer and magician Martin Gardner. It is based on a puzzle with ten coins, but the puzzle aspect has been removed and the result is a strange and subtle mystery.

Ten pennies are arranged as shown in figure 124. The triangle of coins, it is emphasized, points downward. The triangle is covered with a square of cardboard. Now the cardboard is rotated 180°. When it is lifted away, all ten coins have similarly rotated 180° and now point upward, as shown in figure 125.

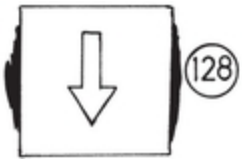
Method: The trick combines an impossible effect with a subtle method that requires no skill. First arrange the ten pennies as shown in figure 124. Emphasize to the audience that the triangle formed by the pennies points downward — that is, toward the performer's body.

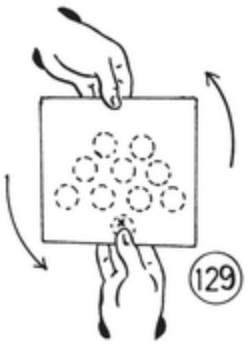
Now pick up a square of cardboard big enough to cover the coins. You are about to cover the pennies. The hands come to rest momentarily over the row of four pennies. The fingers of each hand secretly grasp the end pennies in the row of four, as shown in figure 126, and shift them to the second-from-bottom row, as shown in figure 127. All of this is done while drawing the cardboard over the triangle of pennies.





Draw an arrow on top of the cardboard to show the direction in which the coin triangle points (figure 128). The hands then grasp the cardboard as indicated in figure 129. At the same time, the right hand secretly grasps the coin marked X as indicated in figure 129.





The cardboard is rotated counterclockwise 180°, to the new position shown in figure 130. As this position is reached, the right hand releases its secretly held penny.

Note that by shifting just three pennies you have in effect shifted the way the coin triangle points. Mutter a few cabalistic words (“abracadabra” is an excellent word) and say that by turning the cardboard, you have caused the triangle of ten coins to completely rotate so that it now points upward.

Lift the cardboard to show that the triangle has indeed turned completely around.

Note that by emphasizing the apparent fact that *all ten coins* turned around, you have made the problem seem much more difficult than it really is. In fact you’ve made the problem appear impossible, since no one could conceivably cause ten ordinary pennies to simultaneously move to a new position. Thus the audience is amazed when you lift the cardboard and show that the impossible has happened.

The 32¢ Trick

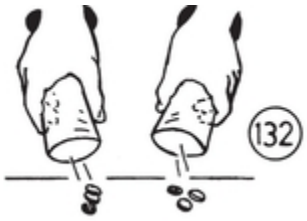
Tricks where solid objects penetrate other solid objects, aptly named *solid-through-solid effects*, are always eye-catching, especially when they occur visibly, with no cover, and even more especially when the trick is repeated. This is one approach, using ordinary objects.

Required are two glasses plus two dimes, two nickels, and two pennies. A penny, a dime, and a nickel are dropped into each glass. “The dime and the nickel are similar,” the magician says, “but the penny is the only coin made of pure copper. It is well known that copper conducts electricity because of the elastic bonds within copper atoms. So elastic are copper atoms that they can penetrate solid glass.”

The magician picks up one of the glasses with his left hand and holds it over the other glass. He taps the upper glass and immediately the penny inside the glass penetrates the glass and falls into the bottom glass (figure 131).

The glass he is holding is replaced on the table. Pointing to the other glass, he says: “Now there are two pennies in this glass. Watch, I’ll do it again.” He picks up the second glass, holds it over the first, taps it and once again, quite visibly, a penny drops through the solid glass and falls into the other glass.

At the finish the three coins are allowed to slide out of each glass (figure 132) and all may be left with the spectators.



Method: The trick combines a bit of easy preparation with some fast talking. You need two ordinary drinking glasses. Moisten the base of each. Place a penny on the base of each glass. A penny will adhere to the outside base of each glass because of the moisture. The result is shown in figure 133. Remember that each of the two glasses is prepared this way.

Presentation: With the glasses on the table, reach into your pocket, bring out a handful of change, and say that you will use a nickel, dime, and penny for each glass. In fact, remove a dime and a nickel together and drop them into the first glass. Then remove another dime and another nickel; drop them together into the second glass.

Say, “Each glass contains a dime, a penny, and a nickel.” This is not true since the penny is *under* each glass, but you tip the glasses a bit as if to display the contents (figure 134).

Place the glasses on the table. Pick up the glass on the left with your left hand and hold it directly above the other glass. Tap the mouth of the glass with the right palm, as in figure 131. The penny stuck under the base of the raised glass is dislodged and obligingly falls into the glass on the table.

The left hand puts its glass down. Then it picks up the other glass and holds it over the first glass. Tap the upper glass. This causes the penny under this second glass to dislodge and fall into the first glass. Thus you have produced a double visible penetration.

All that remains is to pick up a glass in each hand and slowly slide the contents out, as in figure 132. You may leave the apparatus with the audience since there is nothing to find.

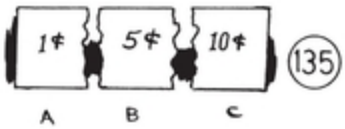
The trick can be done at the table, say in a restaurant, since it is relatively easy to load a penny under each of the two glasses without calling attention to what you are doing. If asked to repeat the trick you can perform the excellent “Ghost Coin” described later in this chapter. It too is a penetration effect, but with a different method.

Money Mental

The reader may have noticed that the tricks in this chapter deal with magical effects (vanishes, penetrations, et cetera) and mental tricks where the magician displays ESP ability with coins. Generally it is a good idea to mix different kinds of tricks because it keeps the audience off balance. They know that ESP is accomplished by supernatural means, so they tend to think that perhaps your other magic is at least partially the result of strange powers. They may not be totally convinced, but on the other hand they are not as likely to dismiss the entire performance as mere finger-flinging or clever juggling.

This is a mental trick using three coins and a borrowed piece of paper. The same effect will show up again and again in the general literature of magic because there seems to be something quite out of the ordinary in being able to divine the identity of each of three covered objects.

On a piece of opaque paper the magician writes 1¢, 5¢, and 10¢, as in figure 135. While he’s doing this, he asks someone for the loan of a penny, a dime, and nickel.



The paper is torn into three roughly equal pieces (A, B, and C as shown in figure 135). While he turns his back, the magician directs the spectator to wrap a coin in each piece of paper. To make it as difficult as possible, he adds that the spectator should not wrap a coin in the paper that has the same denomination written on it. In other words, he should not wrap the dime in the paper that has 10¢ written on it, nor the penny in the paper that has 1¢ written on it, nor the nickel in the paper that has 5¢ written on it.

The spectator wraps one coin in each paper. Each paper is opaque and the magician cannot in fact know which paper contains which coin. After concentrating for a moment, the magician says: “I’m getting the strongest vibration from the nickel. Give me the paper containing the nickel.”

This package is placed on his outstretched hand (figure 136). “The nickel contains more metal than the other coins,” the magician says. “So it can store more telepathic information.” He concentrates a moment more, then points to the other packages. “That one contains the dime,” he says, “and the other contains the penny.” The packages are opened, and in each case the magician is correct.

Method: The secret has already been given, specifically, in your instruction to the spectator.

Have a spectator place a coin in the center of the first piece of paper (position A in figure 135) and twist the paper around the coin to conceal the coin from view. He can snap a rubber band around the twisted package to keep it from untwisting. Similarly, he conceals a coin in the middle piece of paper (B), and the remaining coin in the third piece (C). Each

piece of paper remains in place on the table before and after a coin is placed inside. This means that the spectator does not mix the packages around after the coins have been concealed in them.

Because of the instruction you have given the spectator that a coin cannot be placed in a paper that contains a written notation that matches the denomination of the coin, it follows that the nickel cannot be in the center piece of paper. It must be in one of the end pieces, but you do not know which.

That's why you tell the spectator that you're getting strong vibrations from the nickel. Ask him to place the package containing the nickel on your outstretched palm. This takes the hard work out of the trick because the spectator is in essence doing the work for you. If he picks up the package from position A and puts it on your palm, you know the penny is in position C. If he places the package from position C on your palm, you know the penny is in position B. Since two of the coins are known, the position of the dime follows automatically.

A Coin Swindle

Tricks that are complete swindles cannot (or rather, should not) be performed on their own because as a general rule they are not strong enough to stand by themselves. The problem is that the method is too close to the effect, so the spectator is likely to get a tip-off that you are cheating. However, when mixed in with more genuine tricks, swindles usually create a profound impression. The following is a classic example.

The performer removes a handful of change from his left trouser pocket. He extends the handful of change to a spectator, along with a marking pen, and invites the spectator to decide on one coin, mark it with an X, and return it to the magician's left palm.

When this has been done the magician takes the coin with his right hand. The balance of the change is returned to the left trouser pocket. The coin is then placed against the trouser leg directly below the pocket (figure 137). The magician rubs the coin against the cloth, whereupon the coin

vanishes. It is found back inside the pocket. A startling penetration of a marked coin.

Method: It is all a hoax, but presented with confidence it seems an impressive feat of magic. All is as it appears up to and including the point where the spectator places an X on a coin. From there the swindle is enacted.

The left hand holds the handful of change. The right hand pretends to take the marked coin. In reality it simply slides another coin over the marked coin, thus covering it. The right hand pretends to grasp the marked coin and hold it aloft (figure 138). The left hand hesitates a bit so that the spectator can clearly see that his marked coin is no longer visible in the left palm. Mentally the spectator concludes that the marked coin must be in the magician's right hand.

The left hand then returns the change to the left trouser pocket. The right hand takes its supposed coin and pretends to place it against the trouser leg in the vicinity of the left trouser pocket. The right hand rubs the imagined coin against the trouser leg, the right fingers slowly spread apart, and the right hand comes away empty. The marked coin has evaporated into thin air.

Now reach into the left trouser pocket and remove the change. “By the way,” you ask, “what coin did you mark?” The spectator might say a quarter. Go through the change and toss out the quarters. If necessary, turn each quarter over until you find the marked one.

It has returned to the pocket under impressive conditions, no moves, no sleights, no gimmicks. Since the trick is a fraud in the literal sense of the word, it is well to follow it with another trick before the spectator has a chance to ask questions. The next coin effect is ideal for this purpose.

Double Express

The magician has just finished the “Coin Swindle” or some other trick that leaves him with a coin marked by a spectator. Assume the marked coin is a quarter. Displaying it as in figure 139, the magician says: “I like to save marked coins like this one. They make nice souvenirs.” So saying, he puts the coin away in his inside jacket pocket.

Now taking another quarter from another pocket, he places it beneath the tabletop and asks a spectator to hold it, keeping the coin firmly grasped. The magician removes a pen or pencil from his pocket, waves it over the table, and tells the spectator to bring his closed fist into view.

When the spectator opens his hand, inside is found the marked coin from the previous trick! The marked quarter has changed places with the unmarked quarter, and the spectator himself can remove the unmarked quarter from the performer’s inside jacket pocket.

Method: Oddly enough, just the two quarters are used. After you’ve finished a trick like “A Coin Swindle,” you are holding the marked quarter

as indicated in figure 139. The left hand opens the jacket and the right hand pretends to place the quarter into the inside jacket pocket. Actually the right hand drops the marked quarter down the jacket sleeve, as shown in figure 140. The left arm is naturally bent at the elbow (since the left hand is holding the jacket open) so the coin will fall only to the elbow.

The left hand now reaches into the trouser pocket, ostensibly to get another quarter. In fact, as the arm straightens the marked quarter falls into the left hand, and it is *this* coin which you bring into view. Naturally,. the marked side of the quarter must be away from the spectator.

If you are seated at a table, have him hold the quarter under the table. Otherwise, have him hold the coin in a tight fist and place the fist behind his back.

Reach into the pocket for a pen or pencil. Wave it in the air and mutter some sort of incantation. Tell the spectator to remove the unmarked quarter from under the table or from behind his back. When he does, and opens his hand to discover that he now holds the marked quarter, it comes as a tremendous surprise.

Naturally you had another quarter in the inside jacket pocket before the trick started. The spectator himself can remove this coin from your pocket to complete the transposition.

Ghost Coin

This fine effect was devised by Jimmy Herpick. As the audience sees it, two shot glasses are placed mouth-to-mouth, as shown in figure 141. A dime, which is tossed into the air, proceeds to vanish. The invisible coin falls and is caught inside the shot glasses.

Method and Presentation: Again there are no gimmicks, no sleight of hand, and no duplicate coins (the usual methods associated with this kind of trick). The method is much easier than anyone would expect, with subtle ideas replacing sleights. All that you need are two shot glasses, the dime, and acting ability.

Beforehand, the inside bottom of one glass is moistened. When ready to do the trick, place the two shot glasses in front of you, with the moistened one on the right. Drop the dime into the glass on the left. Pick up a glass in each hand. Pour the dime from the left glass into the right glass (figure 142). The left hand then places its glass on the table.

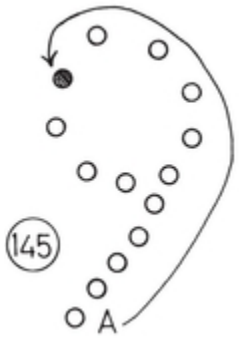
Acting ability comes into play here. The right hand pretends to tip the dime out into the left hand (figure 143). But since the bottom of the shot glass is moistened, the dime will adhere to the inside bottom of the glass. The left hand pretends to take the dime, and the left hand closes into a loose fist.

The right hand places its glass mouth-to-mouth with the shot glass already on the table (figure 144). Note that the position of the right hand over the glass prevents the audience from seeing the dime clinging to the inside bottom of the upper glass.

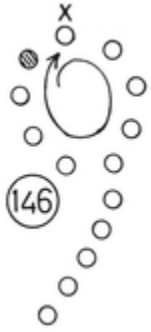
Look up at the ceiling as if searching for a particular spot. The left hand then tosses the supposed dime upwards. The dime seems to vanish in thin air. As all attention is misdirected at the supposed flight of the dime into the air, the right hand lifts *both* glasses from the table and gives them a shake. This causes the dime to dislodge and it falls into the bottom glass. As soon as the dime begins to clink around in the bottom glass, drop your gaze as though you have followed the flight of the invisible dime as it fell to a position between the two glasses.

The Nine Mystery

A group of coins is arranged to form an outline of the mystic number 9, as shown in figure 145. A spectator decides on a number greater than 5 and counts to that number by starting at point A on the tail of the 9 and going up around the circle of the figure in a counterclockwise direction. If he thought of 11, for example, he would count as indicated by the arrow in figure 145 and end up on the shaded coin.



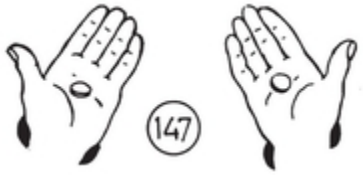
Now, beginning on this coin, he counts clockwise *around the circle*, using the same number. He arrives at a random coin. In our example, he would count the shaded coin as 1, and then continue counting clockwise until he arrived at the number 11, represented by the coin marked X in figure 146. Although the process is completely random, when he lifts the coin at X, he finds a small, folded piece of paper. Written on the paper are the words YOU WILL CHOOSE THIS COIN.

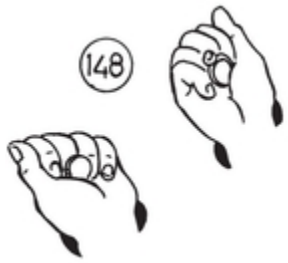


Method: The trick works itself. Make sure the coin at X is a quarter or larger. There is no reason for this other than the fact that you want the prediction message concealed as thoroughly as possible. Otherwise, the trick proceeds as written. Simply make sure that the 14 coins are arranged exactly as shown in figure 145; make sure you remember to treat the whole thing as some utterly mysterious ritual beyond human understanding, and the audience will accept it as the real thing.

Coins and a Ring

Three dimes are placed on the table. The magician also asks for the loan of a finger ring. The magician holds out his hands, palms up, and asks the spectator to place a dime on each palm (figure 147). Then the magician closes his hands and asks that a dime be placed on his left knuckles and the borrowed ring on his right knuckles. When the spectator has done this, the situation is as shown in figure 148.



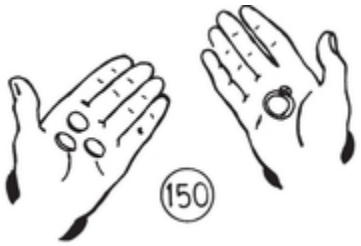


The hands are turned over quickly. The left hand tries to catch the dime on the left knuckles, while the right hand simultaneously tries to catch the ring on the right knuckles. The magician fails in his first attempt — the dime and the ring fall to the table (figure 149).

The spectator replaces the dime on the magician's left knuckles and the ring on the right knuckles. The magician is back to the position indicated in figure 148. "I might have better luck if I try it with one hand at a time," he says. He turns the right hand over quickly and catches the ring in the right fist. Then he turns the left hand over and catches the dime in the left fist.

“Good,” the magician says. “Now I can show you the trick I originally intended to do.” The left hand, with its two dimes, is placed under the table. The right hand, with a ring and a dime, is placed above the table. The magician raps the right fist against the tabletop. “The dime is smaller than the ring,” he says, “so it will slip right through the tabletop.” The right hand is opened and it now contains only the ring.

The left hand is brought up into view and now it contains all three dimes (figure 150).



Method: It is the apparent failure shown in figure 149 that actually sets up the trick. A coin is placed on each palm as in figure 147. The hands close into fists. Then the spectator places a dime on the left knuckles and the borrowed ring on the right knuckles (figure 148). Thus far all is as it appears to be.

The magician turns the hands over in a quick gesture as he tries to catch the visible dime in the left fist and the ring in the right fist. This is where the trickery comes into play. Actually the left fingers do catch the dime from the left fist and draw it into the fist. But the right hand opens slightly, allowing the ring on the knuckles *and* the dime in the right fist to fall to the table.

The situation at this point is shown in figure 149. The audience assumes that the coin came from the left knuckles and the ring from the right knuckles. The true situation at this point is that the left hand contains two dimes, the right hand none.

Turn the hands so that the knuckles are up. Have the dime “replaced” on the left knuckles and the ring replaced on the right knuckles. Say that you would have much better luck if you tried to catch the objects one at a time. Turn the right hand over and catch the ring with the fingers, drawing the

ring into the right palm as the right hand closes into a fist. Then turn the left hand over and catch the dime, drawing it into the left fist.

Place the left hand under the table, saying that you'll place the hand with the two dimes under the table. Tap the tabletop with the closed right fist, saying that this hand contains one large object, the ring, and one small object, the dime. "The dime is easier to push through the table," you say. Tap the tabletop again with the right hand, open it, and show that now it contains just the ring.

Bring the left hand into view, open it, and show that it contains the three dimes. Note that here, as in most previous tricks, the objects can be borrowed and marked, then later returned to their owners.

Note also that the distracting object is the ring. It is different in shape, size, and appearance from the dimes and hence tends to become the focus of the audience's attention. In a magical sense the psychology is sound because the ring has absolutely nothing to do with the success of the trick, so you want audience attention directed at just such an object.

A Flourish and a Trick

Before leaving the subject of coin magic, it would be worthwhile to present the reader with a trick that is not self-working. Although not difficult, this basic flourish requires practice and will provide the reader with a modest goal to attain. Another reason for including a trick of this type here is that by practicing a manipulative coin trick, the reader will discover that the easy tricks that preceded it are even easier to accomplish. This in turn lends an air of authority to the way you handle the tricks, be they easy or difficult.

The flourish was originally described in a letter written by Joseph K. Schmidt, in which he mentions learning the flourish in 1944. It is an eye-opener even if performed as a juggling feat and can be learned in a short time.

Start with a stack of three quarters held as in figure 151. The center quarter should have sharp milled edges, and the outer two quarters should be slightly worn.

The middle coin is pulled out with the third finger and held between the forefinger and the third finger (figures 152 and 153). With the aid of the middle finger it is flipped over (figures 154, 155, and 156). Then the third finger returns it to the center of the stack, as shown in figure 157.

Repeated several times in quick succession, it produces the illusion of an intricate and extremely difficult flourish. To aid in repeating the flourish, make sure the coins are not squared each time.

Once you have mastered the flourish, a simple but puzzling trick can be devised around it. Hand three quarters to a spectator, requesting that he stack them one on top of the next, with the head-side of each coin uppermost. Take back the stack and cover the stack with a handkerchief.

As the right hand sweeps the handkerchief over the stack to cover it, perform the flourish under cover of the handkerchief. Have the spectator grasp the stack of quarters through the handkerchief and hold them securely (figure 158).

Display another stack of three quarters and align them all heads up. Stack them one on top of the next so you have a stack of three quarters.

Openly remove the center quarter from the stack, turn it over so it is tails up, and insert it back into the center of the stack.

Explain that a sympathetic reaction occurs with the three quarters held by the spectator. Have the handkerchief removed from the spectator's stack. He examines the center coin and finds that it has somehow turned itself over. Since he has held the stack all along, it seems impossible to cause any coin — and certainly not the center coin — to turn over. Added to this is the perfect cover provided by the handkerchief, making it a baffling impromptu mystery.

This last trick provides a good example of how magic should be done to achieve maximum dramatic impact. A simple sleight (really a flourish) is unobtrusively introduced into a demonstration of the mysteries of sympathetic magic. The effect smacks of mysticism and the supernatural — how else could a coin held *by the spectator* mysteriously turn over? But the method is grounded in straightforward principles, well covered and imperceptibly introduced as part of a logical handling.

6

Rope Magic

The best-known rope trick is one that doesn't exist and probably never did. Known as "The Hindu Rope Trick," and first described about 1370 A.D. by Ibn Batuta, an Arab, this spectacular trick begins with the magician throwing the end of a long rope into the air. The end of the rope remains suspended in midair. The magician's boy assistant climbs the rope to the top, and immediately disappears.

Thus far it is clear that this is not the average, run-of-the-mill rope trick, but further marvels lie in store. Not only does the boy disappear from the top of the rope, but after a while he falls to the ground in pieces, arms, legs, torso, head. At the magician's command the pieces join together and the boy is restored to his former vigor.

Magicians the world over have tried to find a single individual who has actually witnessed this marvelous trick. Some have even offered a generous reward to any Indian magician (or *jadoo-wallah*) who can perform the trick out in the open, satisfying the conditions of the effect stated above. In 1922, L. H. Branson, a British magician, offered a sum of money to anyone who could duplicate "The Hindu Rope Trick." To this day no one has stepped forward to claim the money.

The tricks in this chapter use a piece of rope as the main item of apparatus. While none are as spectacular as "The Hindu Rope Trick," they have the redeeming feature that they can be performed without recourse to the supernatural.

Getting down to particulars, the rope should be of the cotton clothesline variety. A soft rope with the core removed works best. Avoid plastic-coated or plastic-treated rope. The length of the rope should be

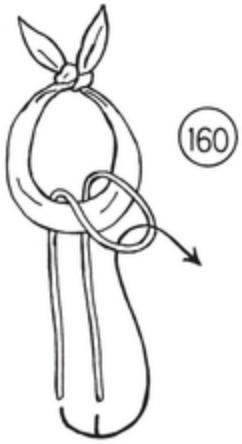
approximately equal to your own height. This is a rough rule of thumb. The rope can be longer or shorter, depending on which length seems easiest to handle.

A coiled rope can be carried in the pocket, yet with this simple apparatus a vast number of mysterious feats can be performed. There is a two-volume encyclopedia on rope tricks, and many individual books on specific aspects of rope magic. A sample of some of the best rope magic is given in this chapter.

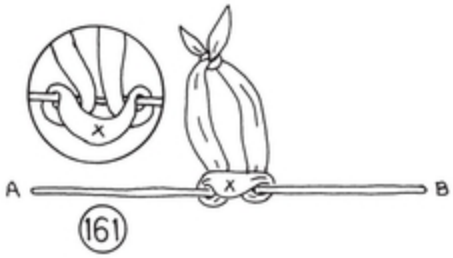
Sawing through a Rope

A scarf is borrowed and tied into a loop. The looped scarf is then tied onto the center of a piece of rope. On command the scarf penetrates the rope, thus freeing itself completely from the rope.

Method: Borrow a silk scarf from a lady in the audience and tie the ends together to form a knotted circle of silk (figure 159). Place the center of the rope through the center of the silk (figure 160), and then draw the rope ends up under the silk and through the loop in the rope (in the direction of the uppermost arrow in figure 160) to trap the silk.



Place end A (figure 161) of the rope on the floor and hold end B in your teeth. This stretches the rope to its full length and leaves your hands free. One hand grasps the rope at a point just above the silk; this is done to keep the rope in place. The other hand then grasps the silk at point X in figure 161 and pulls it gently away from the rope.



The silk scarf will seem to melt through the rope. Untie the ends of the scarf and return it unharmed to its owner.

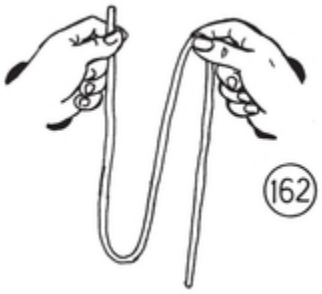
A word about the borrowed apparatus. You need not borrow the silk scarf necessarily from a lady, but the scarf should be silk because silk has less tendency to bind than synthetics like nylon. The point is not critical, but if you have the opportunity, borrow a scarf made of silk (or use a lightweight silk handkerchief of your own) because it makes the handling easier and smoother. The method and handling of this routine were suggested by J. W. Sarles.

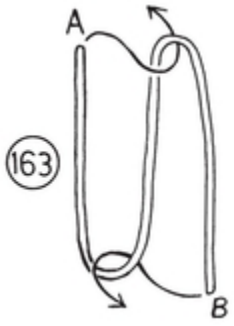
Double-Cut Mystery

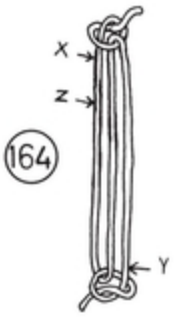
An effect closely associated with rope is that of the cut and restored rope. The magician displays a length of rope, cuts it at its center, so that the rope is in two pieces, and then causes the rope to restore itself. Popular theory has it that the magician uses invisible glue, sub-miniature magnets, or other gadgets not yet invented to bring about the restoration of the rope. It's true that there are gimmicked versions of the cut and restored rope, but most of the best methods use just the rope and a pair of scissors.

In the present version the rope is cut not once but twice. The pieces are knotted and shown; there can be no doubt that the rope is hopelessly mangled. Yet with no sleights or switches, the magician causes the knots to drop off the rope and the rope to completely restore itself. The center of the rope may be initialed by a spectator and at the finish he can examine the rope microscopically and still be mystified.

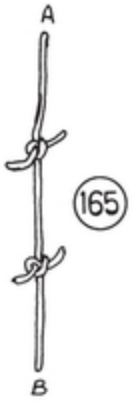
Method: Display the rope as in figure 162. Now (referring to figure 163) end A is passed under the upper loop, as shown by the top arrow, and then knotted to the loop. End B is similarly handled by threading it in the direction of the arrow at the bottom of figure 163. The result is shown in figure 164.



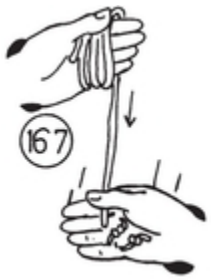




Hold the rope at point Z (figure 164) with one hand. Then cut the rope at point Y and then at point X. The rope will fall into what appears to be three knotted pieces, as shown in figure 165. Place end A in the left hand as shown in figure 166. The right hand then winds the rope around the left hand.



If you follow this with rope in hand you will notice a curious thing: as the right hand winds the rope around the left hand, the knots will automatically slide off the rope and secretly end up in the right palm (figure 167).



Close the right hand into a loose fist. Then tap the left hand against the right hand, at the same time allowing the knots to fall from the right hand to the table or floor. From out front it looks as if you have caused the knots to jump off the rope. To finish, simply unravel the rope and show it fully restored.

If you try this trick you may be baffled as to exactly why it works. The reason is that the knots depicted in figure 165 were originally the ends of the rope. In other words, when you made the double cut, the ends were being cut, not the center of the rope. The trick won't work unless the rope is cut at points X and Y (in figure 164). If you cut anywhere else, disaster lies ahead. Practice the trick so it can be performed without hesitation or fumbling, and you will have mastered an impressive mystery.

Cheating the Hangman

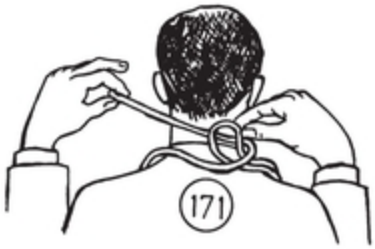
This is a trick in which an unprepared piece of rope is tied around the magician's neck and knotted. A spectator on each side of the magician pulls sharply on the rope. The rope penetrates the magician's neck. He is unharmed by the visible penetration, and the rope is still knotted at the finish.

Method: The routine was developed by Tenkai, Japan's prolific and gifted master magician. It should be stated here that if you are under the age of eighteen, *don't* try this trick. You have nothing to lose by skipping this trick and going on to the next one, but much to risk if the trick goes wrong.

Drape the rope over your neck as shown in figure 168. Now grasp the rope at X with the right hand and simultaneously at Y with the left hand.

In the same motion, the right hand begins to pull its portion of the rope to the right as the left hand starts lifting its portion of the rope up toward the head (figure 169).

As the right hand reaches the position in figure 170A, the left hand continues to pull its end up over the head and around the right side of the neck (figure 170B). The right hand then guides its looped portion of the rope around to the back of the neck, secretly allowing the loop to be caught by the left-hand rope end as shown in the exposed view in figure 171. Thus, the rope has not been doubled around the neck as the audience assumes. In fact, the rope is already in position to apparently penetrate the neck. The view from the front is shown in figure 172.



Tie a simple overhand knot with the ends of the rope and draw the knot snugly against the front of the neck. Have two spectators stand on opposite sides of you and have each take an end of the rope. Instruct them to pull the ends in opposite directions.

If you have followed the above instructions correctly, the rope will seemingly penetrate the neck, leaving you unharmed and leaving the knot still in the center of the rope. Dramatically performed, the trick has the impact of a stage illusion, and indeed it has been used by stage magicians with a “Cheating the Hangman” or “Cheating the Gallows” setting.

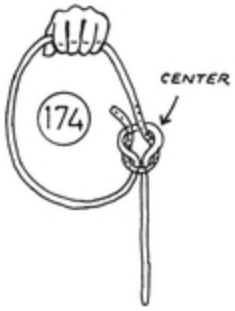
For obvious reasons this trick should be practiced until it is absolutely familiar to you. Nothing will go wrong if you perform the trick as written, but if you make a mistake or get the rope twisted, you will end up with a rope burn or worse. The practice is worth it because the routine can be built up to quite dramatic proportions.

Single-Cut Rope

In this routine the spectator indicates the exact center of a piece of rope. The magician cuts the rope at that point and forms a knot in the center. While two spectators hold the ends of the rope, the magician plucks the knot off the center, leaving the rope restored.

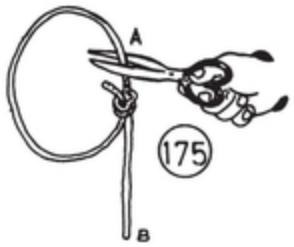
Method: To make your task as easy as possible, beforehand stretch the rope out to its full length and make several pencil dots along one end of the rope for a distance of about 5”, as shown in figure 173. This preparation is not necessary but it does remind you where the end of the rope is, should you get confused the first few times you try the trick. With experience you will learn how to handle the rope for this trick and then the trick can be performed without prior preparation.

To present the routine, ask a spectator to point out the exact center of the rope. When he does, tie a square knot at the center. Figure 174 shows the result. Hold the chosen center of the rope in an upward loop with one hand, and with the other, bring the pencil-dotted end of the rope up over the top of it and down through it; then finish tying the square knot, as indicated in figure 174.



Then say, “We’ll cut the rope at the exact spot that we’ve marked off as the center.” Pick up a pair of scissors and cut the rope as indicated in figure 175. You are the only person who sees the pencil dots on the rope,

and it is the pencil-dotted end portion you cut near the square knot, not actually the center portion.



Have a spectator hold one end of the rope (at point A in figure 175) and have another spectator hold the other end (B). If the square knot was correctly tied, you can pluck the knot off the center of the rope. If this doesn't work, simply grasp one strand of the knot and give it a sharp upwards tug. The knot will unravel and pull free of the rope. In either case the audience will be shocked to see the rope restored.

The best way to present a trick like this is in a somewhat humorous manner. After the rope has been cut and the spectators are holding the ends, tell the audience that you will endeavor to try what no human has previously attempted, to hypnotize an inanimate object, namely the rope. Make mystic passes over the center of the rope. Addressing the center of the rope, ask, "Are you hypnotized?" Of course the rope does not answer. Act pleased and say: "No answer. The rope is already in a deep trance. I want it to *think* it is fully restored. Then it will act fully restored."

Pluck the knot off the center of the rope. "See, the rope appears to be restored. It will act that way for days until the trance wears off. Then it will fall apart into two pieces." It is patently obvious that the rope has been restored without the aid of hypnosis, but you pretend that deep powers are involved.

Impromptu Needle-Threading

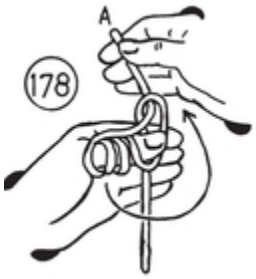
The four tricks following this one all involve the magical linking and unlinking of a ring or bracelet from the center of a piece of rope. "Impromptu Needle-Threading" is a logical prelude. The magician

explains that in order to practice the linking of solid rings onto the center of a piece of rope, he practices with a small ring made from a coil of rope.

He then demonstrates by making a small coil, “not much bigger than the eye of a needle,” and proceeds to magically thread the needle.

Method: Hold the rope as shown in figure 176. Loop it around the left thumb in the direction of the arrow until you’ve made several turns. Then bring up a small loop of rope against the left forefinger and hold it in place with the left thumb as in figure 177.

Now grasp end A of the rope with the right hand. Say, “The object is to thread the eye of the needle without letting go of the end of the rope.” The right hand appears to move straight forward, grazing the top of the loop. In fact, it moves in a slightly curved upward arc — as shown by the arrow in figure 178— in a quick motion. Simultaneously, the left thumb and forefinger momentarily ease their pressure on the base of the loop, allowing the right hand to draw strand A taut along the inside of the thumb and up through the concealed opening at the base of the loop, in a rapid, undetectable motion. The end result is shown in figure 178. You have succeeded in threading the needle.



This is a well-known trick among magicians but it serves to plant a thought in the minds of the spectators. You have admitted that you practice *this* trick to get ready for ring and rope tricks. The audience will naturally try to relate this routine to those you are about to present. They sense a connection, and you want them to, because there is none.

Ring Flite

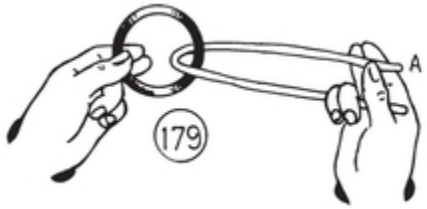
"Ring Flite," the invention of the distinguished New York magician Sam Schwartz, will serve as a fine introduction to ring and rope tricks. The ring can be a plastic bracelet, a ring from a child's hoop-toss game, or a wooden embroidery hoop. Steel harness rings available in hardware stores can also be used. The ring should measure about 3" or 4" in diameter, though the size is not critical.

There are two basic ring and rope tricks. In one of them you cause a ring to become linked onto the center of the rope. In the other you cause the ring to magically release itself from the center of a rope. There are combinations (for example, a black ring falls off a rope while a white ring simultaneously links itself onto the rope) and variations, but these are the basic categories.

Laymen generally theorize that such tricks are done with rings that have a cleverly concealed slot or opening in them. Other theories hold that the rope is split, held together with magnets, that the ring is not really on (or off) the rope but only appears that way, and so on. The true secrets behind the best of these tricks are much less complex and therefore much more subtle.

In this routine a ring is threaded onto the center of a piece of rope. On command it drops free. To begin, hold the ring in the left hand. Hold one end of the rope clenched in the right ring finger and little finger. The other end is held between the right thumb and first finger.

The end of the rope held between the right thumb and first finger, end A, is threaded through the ring and regripped, as shown in figure 179. Note that the threading is done from “front to back,” so that you end up exactly as shown in figure 179.



End A of the rope is then threaded through the ring in the direction of the arrow in figure 180. Once end A is through the ring, this end of the rope is clipped at the base of the right thumb. Note that as this threading is done, the left ring finger and little finger loosely curl around the rope as shown in figure 180.

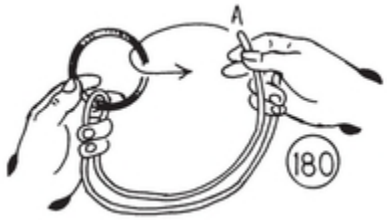
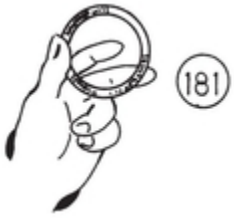
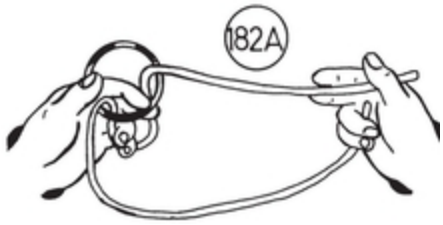


Figure 181 is a detail of how the ring is gripped by the left hand at this point. The rope has been omitted for clarity. This illustration shows the ring held between the left thumb and middle finger.

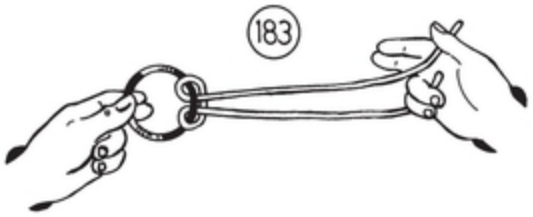


You now shift the grip slightly. Referring to figure 182A, the ring is clipped between the left forefinger and middle finger. These fingers will act as a pivot point for the following action.



The right hand pulls its ends of the rope to the right. The ring pivots downward, as shown in figure 182B. The left thumb relaxes its grip, allowing the ring to pivot downward, but the ring is firmly clipped between the left forefinger and middle finger.

The end result is shown in figure 183. By correctly following the above series of actions you have tied a *girth knot* in the rope. This type of knot appears to genuinely entwine the ring, but in fact it does not.

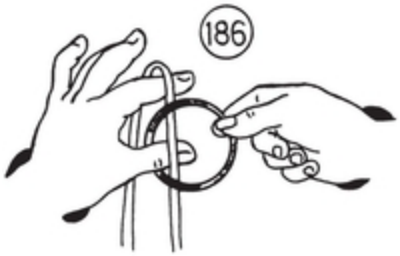


Let the spectator hold both ends of the rope, allowing the knotted ring to dangle loosely in midair. To release the girth knot, pull up on the center of the knot to gain a little slack. Then pull the center down and around the outside edges of the ring and off it, as shown by the arrow in figure 184. This frees the ring, allowing you to drop it to the table.

Lefty

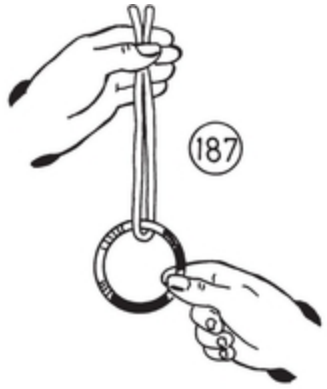
This is a *flash* (quick) method of causing a ring to become linked to the center of a piece of rope. Tell the audience that it only works if you start with the ring hooked onto the left thumb. Place the ring on the left thumb and then drape the rope over the left hand as shown in figure 185.

Grasp the ring in the right hand as in figure 186. At the same time, the left thumb, which is now hooked under the center of the rope, pulls this loop of rope slightly to the left.



Pull the ring down until it is below the left hand and the two ends of the rope are held by the left hand as in figure 187. The ring, which started out on the left thumb, is now securely linked onto the center of the rope. The

trick happens too quickly for the eye to follow. The result looks like instantaneous magic.



This trick and “Ring Flite” can be routined together quite nicely. First perform “Lefty,” causing the ring to become linked onto the center of the rope. Then perform “Ring Flite,” causing the ring to magically free itself from the center of the rope.

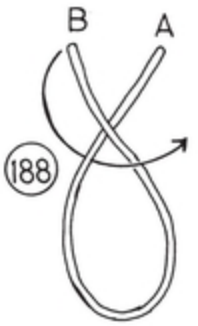
The methods and approaches are entirely different, so, as mentioned earlier, if the audience tries to relate the tricks by means of some inner logic, they will find that the trail leads nowhere. The ruse is roughly the same as practiced in espionage and counterespionage; a set of false clues is used to screen the real circumstances. It is not just that what happened is *more* than the audience knows; what happens is *different* from what they are led to believe. “Lefty” is a simplified handling of a brilliant trick devised by J. W. Sarles.

Lightning Link

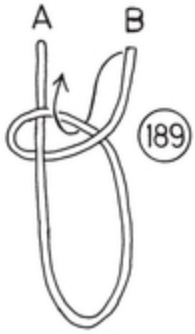
This strange and remarkable trick is the invention of A. Kojima of Japan. The effect is this. The ends of a piece of rope are openly and genuinely knotted together. Holding the rope in one hand and a ring in the other, the magician causes the ring to *instantly* link itself onto the center of the rope.

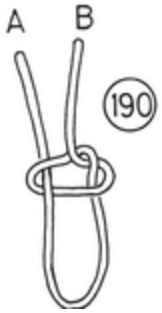
As astounding as the effect is the fact that the trick could be invented at all; it goes against the logic that even magicians utilize, invoking a principle so offbeat, it is a wonder anyone could discover it.

To form the basic knot, cross end B of the rope over end A, as shown in figure 188. Then bring end B around and through the loop as indicated by the arrow in figure 188.

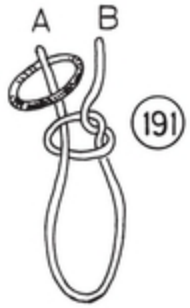


The situation at this point is shown in figure 189. Thread end B through the small loop as indicated by the arrow in figure 189 and tighten the loop. The end result is the slip knot shown in figure 190. The knot is a genuine slip knot; it should be noted that there are other forms of the basic knot, but follow the instructions given here before you experiment with other knots.

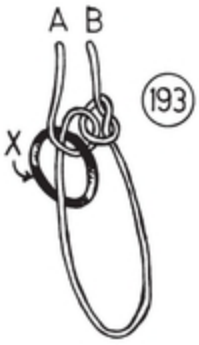




To cause the ring to link itself onto the rope, hold the rope at the knot in the right hand. The left hand then drops the ring over end A, as shown in figure 191. The right thumb and fingers hold the ring against the knot. The left hand now takes end A of the rope and draws it up through the large center loop of rope and then upward to meet end B, as shown by the arrow in figure 192. During this action the right hand is stationary and does not alter its grip on either the knot or the ring.



The situation at this point is shown in figure 193. The left hand now grasps the ring at point X and pulls the ring sharply downward. The result is shown in figure 194. The ring instantly links itself onto the center of the knotted rope. The knot is genuine and you have to untie the rope to get the ring off.



One note on the handling: If you have trouble causing the ring to slide easily along the rope when you attempt to pull the ring sharply downward, it may indicate that the ring is getting snagged by the knot or the bight in the rope. Keep the knot fairly loose until you acquire the knack of the handling and you'll find that the ring will slide easily down to the center of the rope.

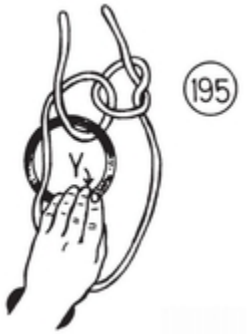
No one is quite certain why this trick works. It is clear that the knot re-ties or re-forms itself in such a way that the ring ends up at the center of the rope. But it is also true that while the trick works with some forms of the slip knot, it will not work with others, and there appears to be no intuitive way to know which knots work until you try them.

Lightning Unlink

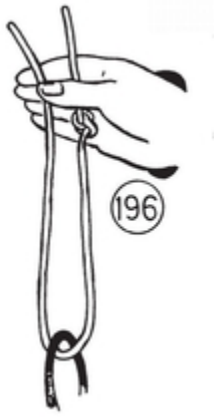
In writing up the Kojima routine in 1973, the author worked out a variation in which the ring both links and unlinks itself from the center of the rope.

Tie a slip knot in the rope as already explained and follow the handling as indicated above through figure 193. You are about to pull the ring straight down, but not in the way originally explained.

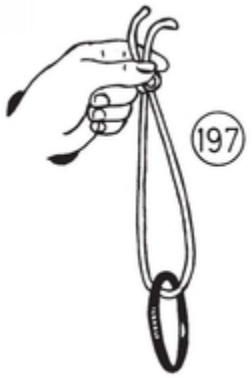
Grasp the ring at point Y in figure 195. The right hand holds firmly to the ends of the rope. Note in figure 195 that the ring is grasped at the point where the ring lies more or less inside the large loop of rope.



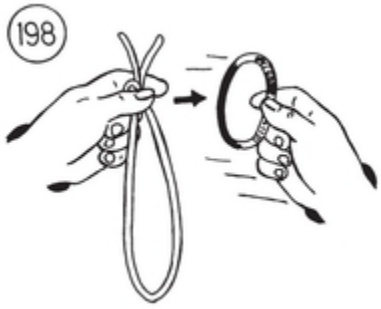
Pull sharply downward through the loop of rope with the left hand. The ring is apparently back on the center of the knotted rope. In fact, the true situation is as shown in figure 196. Although the ring is back on the center of the rope, the rope has untied itself so that you have one loose end and one knotted end.



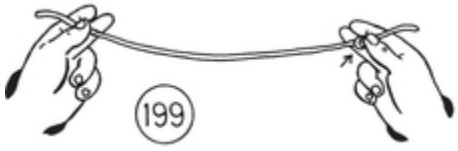
Tell the audience, “The ring is back on the center of the rope. Here’s how to get it off quickly.” Grasp the knot between left thumb and forefinger, pressing the knot against the free end of the rope so that the rope still appears to be genuinely knotted (figure 197).



The right hand now grasps the ring, brings it up along one strand of the rope, slides it between the strands when it reaches the left thumb, and pulls the ring clear of the rope (figure 198). Toss the ring out onto the table.



“The reason we didn’t have to untie the knot is because the knot knew enough to untie itself.” Take hold of the knotted end of the rope with the right hand. Pause, then sharply pull the hands apart, as if breaking the knot, and display the rope as shown in figure 199. The right fingers hide the knot from the audience’s view.



To finish, simply gather the rope and pocket it, along with the ring, and take your bow.

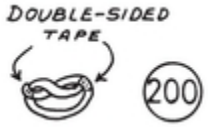
Knot Possible

The last two tricks in this chapter make use of rope knots. The tricks are related in that in each case you show the spectator a simple way to tie a knot in a piece of rope. He tries and fails. Although the effects are similar, the methods differ completely.

This first routine is divided into three phases. The first phase was originally described in print by Milbourne Christopher. Phases two and three are the author's elaborations on the Christopher premise.

Like the Hunter knot described in the chapter on closeup magic, the knot you form here is of the variety where you tie the knot without letting go of the ends of the rope. In fact, the ends are tied together right from the start. You repeat the trick, cause the knot to vanish, repeat it once more, then magically pluck the knot off the rope.

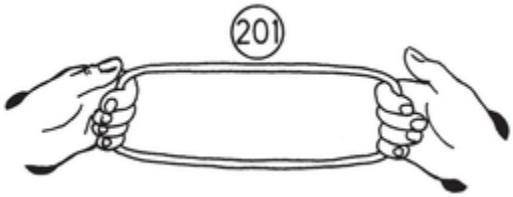
Method: A bit of preparation is called for. Take a 4" piece of rope, tie a simple overhand knot in it, and hold the ends of the knot in place with "double-sided" adhesive tape (figure 200). Double-sided tape is available at most stationery stores or in supermarkets. It has a sticky surface on both sides of the tape.

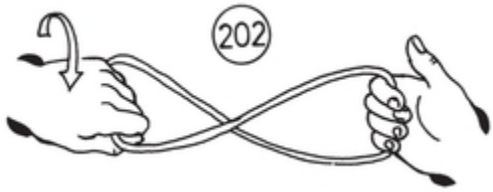


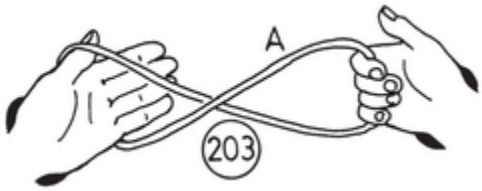
200

The tape serves two purposes. First, it holds the ends of the knot in place as already described. This knot is then slipped under your jacket on the left side. It stays in place there because the sticky surface on the outside of the tape fastens the knot to the inside of the jacket.

PHASE ONE. This is the original Christopher handling. Simply knot the ends of the rope together, forming a loop, then hold the loop as shown in figure 201. (In figures 201—209, the knotted ends of the rope have been omitted for clarity.) Turn the back of your left hand toward you, to the position shown in figure 202, thus forming a loop in each hand. Slide your left palm around to face the inside of its loop and open your fingers at the same time (figure 203).

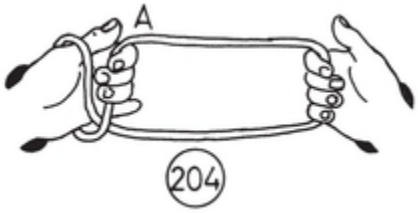


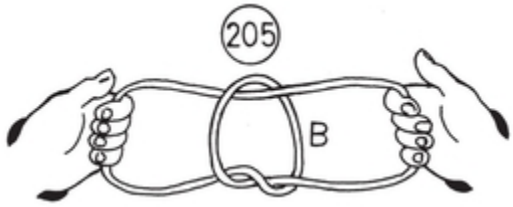




Reach over with your extended left fingers, curl them around the upper rope at the point marked A in figure 203. The result is shown in figure 204. Then the curled fingers of the left hand pull rope section A through the left-hand loop, which automatically slips from the back of the left hand onto the portion suspended between the hands. Figure 205 shows the result. You have apparently tied a knot on the center of a piece of rope under extraordinary conditions.

To cause the knot to disappear, clip the left-hand loop in figure 205 between your left thumb and forefinger. Withdraw the remaining fingers from the loop. Reach under with them, to the far side of the knot, insert them at point B in figure 205, then pull quickly, releasing the section held between your thumb and forefinger at the same time.





You'll find that a left-hand throwing motion toward the right at the point illustrated in figure 204 will aid the loop over the hand in slipping off, and will cause the resulting knot to be nearer the center.

PHASE TWO. Hand the rope to the spectator. Ask him to try to get the same knot in the center of the rope. He tries and fails.

Take back the rope. Form the knot (figure 205) as described in Phase One. To instantly release the knot, the left hand releases its end. Then the left forefinger moves in the direction of the arrow and hooks the center loop in figure 206. When this loop is pulled, the knot instantly vanishes.

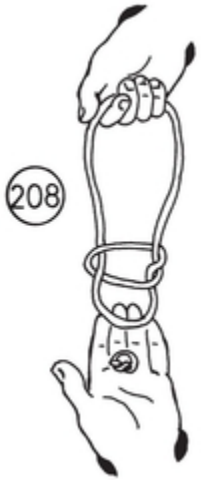
PHASE THREE. Ask another spectator to try to form the knot. When he fails, take back the rope and form the knot according to the instructions in Phase One. Pause for a moment so that the audience can see the knot. They also see that both of your hands are empty except for the rope.

Tell the audience: "The knot has a curious characteristic. Not only can you shake it onto the rope, you can shake it off." As you say this, release your left hand so that the rope hangs as in figure 207. You should be standing with your right side toward the audience.

By simultaneously shaking the rope gently and working it through the right hand in the direction of the arrows in figure 207, the knot will slowly work its way down the rope, visibly sliding toward the lower end.

With all attention on the sliding knot, your left hand falls naturally to your side. The left hand slips under the edge of the jacket and pulls the concealed extra knot into the left palm.

When the knot in the rope has slid down to a position near the bottom end of the rope, the left hand — in a slightly curled position to hide the palmed knot — comes up to take the knot from the rope (exposed view, figure 208).



The knot in the rope will dissolve as soon as it reaches the lower end of the rope. At the same time the left hand pretends to pull at the knot, causing it to apparently fall free of the rope and into the hand (figure 209).

It is this aspect of the routine that adds a bit of deeper mystery to what might otherwise be passed off as a clever stunt or puzzle.

The Gambler's Knot

Tony Slydini, the master of psychology and misdirection, has taken an old idea with a puzzle knot and transformed it into a miniature masterpiece of subtle handling. As simple as this routine is, it is a perfect example of how Slydini conditions the mind of the spectator so that the spectator is in effect working against himself.

The effect itself is straightforward and would seem to allow no room for guile. The performer illustrates a simple way to tie a knot in a piece of rope. The knot is genuine and there is no sleight of hand.

Duplicating the performer's movements, the spectator is amazed to discover that he cannot tie a knot, no matter how often he tries. There is no secret gimmick. It is all a matter of mind conditioning, or mind control — a Slydini specialty acknowledged in all parts of the world.

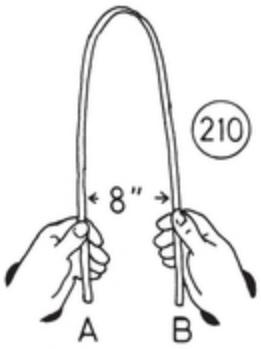
Method and Presentation: Slydini uses a rope that is about six feet long. There are no hidden moves, but you must study and master the trick exactly as described here because there is a reason for each bit of

handling. Although your demonstration of knot tying here appears to be a model of integrity, the spectator is being subconsciously conditioned to approach the problem from exactly the wrong perspective.

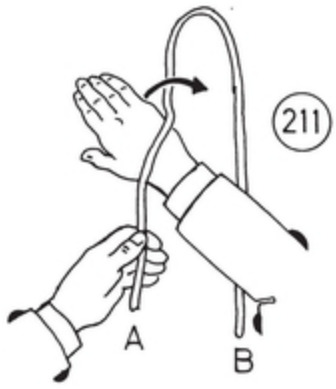
The trick is done with the performer standing and facing the table. The performer stands about one foot from the table.

He begins by grasping the rope by the ends, one end in each hand. The right foot is then extended a few inches, the reason being that the performer will lean forward to toss the rope onto the table and he must have his weight evenly distributed.

The rope is tossed out as shown in figure 210. The performer deliberately leaves a space of about 8” between the sides of the rope. This is too wide a space, but the spectator is being deliberately set up for the business that is to follow.



The right hand releases its grip on end B of the rope. The performer then leans forward slightly and slides the right hand under the left strand of rope (A), as shown in figure 211. The performer says to the audience; “The idea is to catch the opposite side like this . . .”



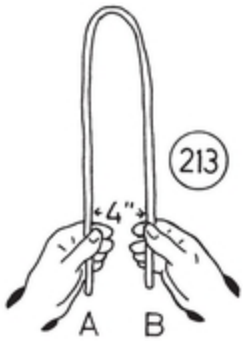
As he speaks, the right hand arcs back *over* the rope in the direction of the arrow in figure 211, as he pretends to reach over for end B. When the right hand reaches the position shown in figure 212, the performer stops and says: “No, the strands are too wide apart. Let me begin again.”

He grasps the ends of the rope and repeats the action shown in figures 210, 211 and 212, exactly as described above.

The reason why the action is repeated is that an important psychological point is being developed. The performer wants the spectator to think that the right hand is *supposed* to move in the direction indicated in figures 211 and 212. In fact, the spectator cannot tie a knot if his right hand moves this way, but he is being conditioned to think that *this* is how his right hand must move.

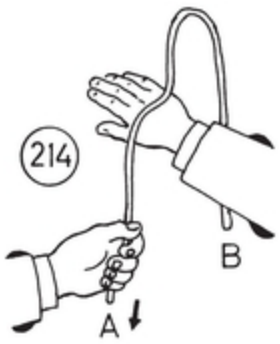
After repeating the above actions two or three times, the performer says: “The strands must be adjusted more carefully. Here, I’ll try again.” Once more he grasps an end of the rope in each hand and throws the center

out, so the rope lies on the table as shown in figure 213. Now the strands are about 4” apart. The rope lies slightly to the left of the performer’s body.



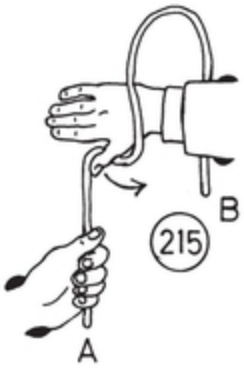
The performer acts satisfied with the way the rope was thrown and says, “We may have better luck this time.” As he speaks, the palm-down right hand releases end B so that this end rests on the table. The right hand will remain palm down during the entire action to follow.

As the right hand releases end B and moves to a position under strand A as before, the performer’s left hand simultaneously begins pulling end A of the rope back toward the body, in the direction of the arrow in figure 214. The left hand moves back about 12” — the reason being that it will help centralize the knot about to be formed. Also, the left-hand motion starts the action of moving the ends apart from one another.

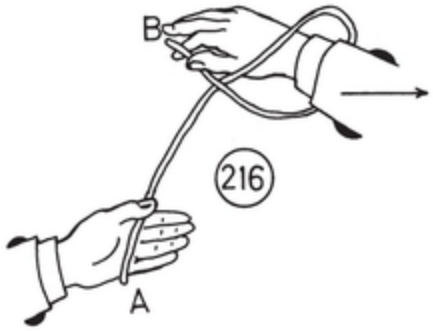


The next step is important. The right hand moves back toward the body as shown in figure 215. Note that the right hand begins to move *over*

strand A of the rope in figure 215, moving back in the direction of the arrow, toward end B.



The performer's right hand grasps end B to form a loop (figure 216). The hands move apart, the right hand slipping through the loop and toward the right. The end position is shown in figure 217. The performer has successfully tied a knot in the center of the rope.



He tosses the rope across the table to the spectator and invites him to try to form the knot by duplicating the performer's actions. On trying this routine you will find that the spectator is forced by a subconscious command to move the right hand in the direction shown in figure 211. As a result he will, to his own amazement, find it impossible to form a knot in

the rope, no matter how often he tries. If you are looking for an elegant example of subliminal suggestion, this is it.

7

Mental Magic

Mental magic, the art of "seeing with the mind," is different from all other types of magic in the way it is performed and the way it is received by the audience. A magician once observed that people crave mystery, and nothing satisfies that craving as completely as a demonstration of supernormal feats of mental magic. H. P. Lovecraft, the noted writer, put it more bluntly when he wrote: "The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown."

A book could be devoted to this subject alone, but for the present we will confine ourselves to a few observations about the art of mental magic. First, it is generally true that people in this field consider themselves different from magicians and don't want it implied that sleight of hand, gimmicks, and other paraphernalia associated with magic are in any way used in mental effects. Thus, practioners of this branch of the art refer to themselves as *mentalists* rather than as "magicians." They seldom associate with magicians and try to avoid using effects that appear magical. Instead they strive for effects that have a supernatural aura about them.

The absolute key to success in this field does not lie in novelty but in personality. Dunninger, a headliner for decades, was the most spectacular mentalist of the present century, easily overshadowing rivals by the sheer dramatic impact he made on audiences. No doubt there were and are mentalists who know more tricks, mentalists who may have made more money at the box office, or who have been seen (thanks to television) by more people, but none had Dunninger's ability to dazzle audiences for decades with a seemingly endless array of new and miraculous effects.

If you have the ability to project a strong, magnetic personality, if you are willing to study and analyze mental effects as excursions into the paranormal, if you can demonstrate your abilities in a clear, simple, dramatic fashion with ordinary objects under seemingly rigid test conditions, you will almost certainly succeed in this strange twilight zone of human endeavor.

It is not known if telepathy, clairvoyance, or other paranormal abilities actually exist — nor, if they do, how they can be controlled. The evidence — if it can be called that — is indirect and illusive, not given to scientific analysis or laboratory testing. Self-proclaimed psychics feel uncomfortably restrained by the spectre of true test conditions, and seers would rather that people forget their incorrect predictions and concentrate instead on the few correct ones.

Further adding to the confusion endemic to this field is the fact that the long history of the paranormal is intertwined with religion, superstition, greed, and fraud. Fear of the unknown, a longing to establish a link with the supernatural, and other human frailties are the common coin of all civilizations, unrelieved by microscopic increases in scientific knowledge. When highly trained physicists talk seriously of “charmed quarks,” when astronomers peer through expensive telescopes at “black holes in space,” when prestigious journals carry learned articles about “Anti-Psychiatry” and “The New Alchemy,” it is hardly reassuring evidence of progress.

Faced with leaders who cannot lead, teachers who cannot teach, spokesmen who speak — at best — in parables, the average person is willing and even eager to flee to the comforting rituals of black magic and other manifestations of the paranormal. Like prayer or chanting, ritual magic *seems* right in some intuitive way, as if untapped powers are buried at the back of the mind — primeval forces that can be relearned and applied as a way of casting light to dispel the threatening shadows.

Deep stuff, this, especially in a book designed to teach the reader how to cut to the Aces, deal a Royal Flush, and predict the Super Bowl. But mental magic is a thing apart. Before you present such magic, be prepared to accept the fact that people *want* to believe in mentalism. Your presentation should be shaped with this in mind. We’ll say a bit more on

the general subject in the next few paragraphs, and then move on to a series of mental effects that seem to demonstrate true paranormal ability.

How to Spot Fraudulent Psychics

Extrasensory perception (or ESP) may exist, but if so, its existence has never been proven by any method known to humanity. Those who claim ESP ability, and especially those who claim *controllable* paranormal abilities, are strangely reluctant to submit to laboratory tests except under exceptionally relaxed conditions. The situation in regard to the testing of supposed psychics was succinctly described by Martin Gardner in an article in the *New York Review of Books*, when he worte in part:

> You suspect someone of habitually cheating at cards. Whom would you hire as a secret observer to settle the matter? A physicist? A self-proclaimed psychic goes about performing miracles exactly like the feats of magicians who specialize in what the trade calls “mentalism.” You suspect the psychic of cheating. Whom do you call upon as an expert witness? A physicist?
>
> One of the saddest, more persistent aspects of the history of alleged psychic phenomena is that there always has been a small, noisy group of scientists who, combining enormous egotism with even greater gullibility, actually imagine that *they* are competent to detect psychic fraud.

If telepathy exists, it cannot be controlled. Sudden visions, flashes of future events, intuition and vague hunches appear more likely to conform to what is known as manifestations of the paranormal. As of this writing, telepathy has not replaced the telephone, nor has the gift of prophesy wrought havoc on the stock market. If ESP existed in a controlled way that could be tuned in like some form of mental television, life on this planet would be vastly different.

This gives us a clue as to how to detect fraudulent psychics. Since potential ESP ability in humans cannot be controlled, the psychic who produces paranormal demonstrations on schedule or by appointment is undoubtedly a fraud. If a psychic can produce evidence of ESP at precisely 8:15 A.M. on national television on a particular night, then he must be able to produce such evidence at any time, on any given day, under any conditions. Of course he can do so only if he is a fraud.

The second method of spotting fraud in the psychic field has to do with performance under true test conditions. Any such test must be set up and monitored by magicians competent in the ways of the psychic hustler. If the psychic balks, if he refuses to perform when magicians are about, he is a fraud.

This chapter does not consider the methods of psychic frauds, but rather the performance of mental magic as a special form of entertainment. Performed as something of a serious excursion into the realm of the supernatural, it may give you a reputation for possessing strange powers. A sample of straightforward experiments in mentalism, this chapter will give the reader some idea of the general approach in a highly specialized field.

Sixes and Sevens

This routine starts out as something of a mild curio, but when repeated it produces a perplexing result easily attributable to telepathy. A spectator who is seated opposite you is asked to remove a dime and a penny from his pocket. Explaining that the numbers 6 and 7 are considered mystic numbers by psychics, you turn your back and say that these two numbers will be used in conjunction with the two coins.

Direct the spectator to place the dime in one hand, the penny in the other. Ask him to multiply the value of the coin in the right hand by 6 and the value of the coin in the left hand by 7. Have him add together the results and announce the total. He does and you immediately tell him that he has the dime in the left hand and the penny in the right.

The trick is repeated, but with a difference. The spectator places a coin in each hand as before. Now that you are on the right telepathic wavelength with him, tell him to multiply the value of the dime by 6 and announce the result. Naturally he says “sixty.” “As I suspected,” you say, turning around. “The dime must be in your right hand and the penny in your left hand.”

And you are right.

Method and Presentation: Sit with your back to the spectator. Ask him to place the dime in one hand, the penny in the other. He can change the coins around if he likes. Tell him to raise his right hand to his forehead and to multiply the value of this coin by 6. Then have him lower this hand to the table.

Ask him to raise his left hand to his forehead and multiply the value of this coin by 7. When he’s done this, tell him to lower his left hand to the table. Have him add the two results together and tell you the total. If the total is even, his right hand holds the penny. If the total is odd, his left hand holds the penny.

That accounts for the first trick but not for the repeat, which is actually accomplished by another method entirely. Tell the spectator: “We seem to be on the right wavelength. Let me try it again, but under more controlled conditions.”

Turn your back. Ask him to place one coin in each hand. Tell him to lift the hand containing the dime to his forehead and multiply its value by 6. Have him announce the total. Of course it will be 60. Tell him to lower his hand to the table. Turn and face him.

Glance at his hands. The hand he just placed to his forehead will be slightly lighter in color than the other hand because, since the hand was raised, the blood drained from it. Since you specifically asked the spectator to raise to his forehead the hand holding the dime, you now know which hand holds the dime.

If the dime was in the right hand, say, “I knew of course that the total would be sixty. It always is when the penny is in your left hand and the dime in your right.” The spectator should be nonplussed by the repeat.

Match Mentalism

Here the mentalist tells the spectator how many matches the spectator has concealed in his hand. The routine, invented by Fred DeMuth, is based on the little-known fact that a new or unused packet of matches will always contain exactly 20 matches. Such a packet should be casually at hand, so that you can toss it to the spectator, turn your back, and proceed as if any match packet could be used.

While your back is turned, instruct the spectator to tear out a few matches from the packet and put them in his pocket. Whatever the number — and it must be less than 10 — ask him not to remember it as it will only interfere with the thought waves you want to receive.

Ask him to count the remaining matches in the packet. For example, there may be 15 matches left in the packet. Ask him to remove a number of matches corresponding to the first digit, then a number of matches corresponding to the second digit. In our example, he would remove 1 match for the first digit and 5 matches for the second digit.

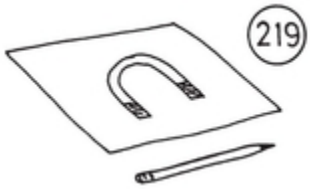
Direct him to place all of these removed matches in his pocket. Some matches remain in the packet. Ask him to remove a few of these and conceal them in his hand. When he has done this, take back the match packet and wave it over his closed hand. You then announce exactly how many matches he has concealed in his hand despite the fact that this number is completely random.

Method: When you turn around and take the match packet from him, mentally count the number of matches remaining in the packet. Subtract this number from 9 and you know how many matches are concealed in his hand.

In presenting the trick, take your time, stall on the revelation, do not make it obvious that you are staring at the match packet to determine the number of matches it contains. Remember the cardinal rule that mental effects do not have to work right away (or even at all in some cases) to be considered successful by the average spectator.

Lines of Force

Draw a horseshoe magnet on a piece of paper (figure 218). Place a pencil below the drawing as shown in figure 219. Tell those witnessing the experiment that if they concentrate on the drawing of the magnet and pretend that it is a real magnet, it will act in sympathy and behave just like a real magnet. All of those present in the room concentrate. Nothing happens for a few minutes. Then, slowly but unmistakably, the pencil begins to move toward the magnet as if strangely attracted to it.



Method: For best results the trick must be allowed to build. In order to create suspense, your best weapon is silence. When you draw the magnet and ask those present to concentrate, one or two may make a joking remark — a natural enough circumstance since you are asking them to believe that a picture of a magnet can be made to act like a real magnet. Wait for the talk to die down. Make certain all attention is directed at the magnet. You then cause the pencil to move toward the magnet as if attracted to it.

How? By unobtrusively blowing on the pencil, you will cause it to roll away from you and hence toward the drawing of the magnet. The trick will also work if instead of a pencil you use straight pins and steel needles borrowed from your host and placed on the table in the vicinity of the drawing. By blowing on the pins and needles, they will gently scatter and move about, as if actually attracted by magnetic forces.

The Lock Mystery

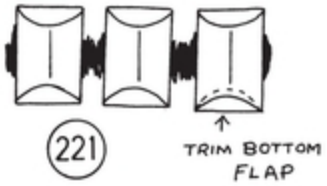
This trick involves a dramatic visual display of sympathetic magic. An ordinary pin-tumbler lock is used. The lock is unfaked and is of the standard type obtainable in any hardware store. Also used are three keys. The assisting spectator tries each key in the lock. One and only one key opens the lock.

Each key is sealed in a separate envelope. The seal on each envelope may be signed to eliminate possible tampering. The envelopes are mixed by a spectator and placed in a row on the table.

The mentalist, holding the lock in his fingertips (figure 220), passes it over each envelope. This is done several times. Suddenly the lock jumps out of the mentalist's hand and falls on one envelope. When this envelope is opened and the key removed, it is seen that this key (and no other) is the one that opens the lock.

Method: Note that you make it appear as if the lock found the right key by sympathetic magic. In fact, you found it, and not by magic. The envelopes you use are the secret. They are called "pay envelopes" or "coin envelopes" and, since they are made of heavy manila paper, they are completely opaque. Their size should be about 2" by 3".

Beforehand, trim a bit of the bottom flap away from one of the envelopes, as shown in figure 221. This slight preparation is visible to you but will not be noticed by anyone else present.



The success of the trick depends on this bit of preparation. Of the three keys, the one that opens the lock is placed in the prepared envelope. Let the spectator seal the envelope. Then direct him to place a key in each of the two unprepared envelopes and seal each envelope.

The envelopes are mixed and dealt out into a row flap-side up on the table. Simply by looking at where the prepared envelope goes, you know where to drop the lock. Pick up the lock and hold it between the thumb and forefinger. Pass the lock over each envelope. Do this two or three times. Pretend to have difficulty, mutter something about the conditions not being just right, adjust the grip on the lock, pass the lock over the envelopes two or three times more, then let the lock drop onto the proper envelope.

To the audience it looks as if the lock pulled itself away from your hand in its efforts to seek out the envelope containing the right key, and that is what you want them to think.

Oracle

A deck of cards lies face down on the table. A spectator cuts off about half the deck. The exact number of cards is not known. From this packet, every card is eliminated except one. The elimination process is performed openly and is absolutely honest. For example, the single card remaining may be the 4♠.

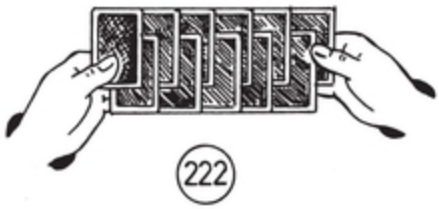
A prediction previously given to a member of the audience is now opened and read. It says: YOU WILL SELECT THE FOUR OF SPADES. The prediction may be mailed out in a sealed envelope days or weeks before the card is chosen. The mentalist never touches the prediction after giving it to the spectator, yet it is always correct.

Method: Write the prediction on a slip of paper, fold the prediction, and seal it in an envelope. Give it to someone in the audience to hold until the end of the trick.

The actual secret to the trick is this. The card you predict is *sixteenth* from the top of the deck. In the example above, you would previously arrange to have the 4♠. sixteenth from the top of the pack.

Presentation: To perform the trick, place the deck face down on the table. Ask the spectator to cut off about half of the deck. In fact he can cut up to 32 cards (but not more) or as few as 16, so if he cuts anywhere near 26 — half the deck, as instructed — you are safe.

Take the cutoff portion from him, holding it face down, and state that you will eliminate every other card until just one remains. The cards are eliminated in the following way. Beginning with the first (top) card, then the third, then the fifth, and so on, upjog every other card, as shown in figure 222. Note that figure 222 is an exposed view; the cards are actually squared at the sides and held in the left hand. When you've finished going through the entire packet upjogging alternate cards, the upjogged cards are stripped out of the packet and discarded.



With the cards remaining, again upjog every other card (beginning with the first), strip the upjogged cards from the packet, and place them aside. Repeat this elimination shuffle with the remaining cards, performing it identically the same way every time, until you are left with just one card. This card will be the 4♠, thus matching your prediction.

Thought Echo

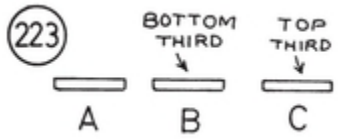
This excellent mental mystery with cards was developed by Sam Schwartz. The trick is quite strong and seems beyond trickery of any kind. A deck of cards is shuffled by two spectators. They each choose a random card while the pack is in their own hands. The deck is then gathered, squared, and given to the mentalist.

Despite the fact that the deck has been repeatedly shuffled, despite the fact that there are no gimmicks, no confederates, and no guesswork, the mentalist finds both of the chosen cards.

Method: Telepathy may be the suspected answer to this mystery, but instead the answer lies in a partially set-up deck and a clever bit of detective work akin to logical deduction.

The deck is arranged face down like this: Place eleven indifferent cards on top, followed underneath by all thirteen clubs, arranged sequentially Ace through King in ascending numerical order, then followed at the bottom by the randomly-arranged balance of the deck. As a check, the A♣ should be twelfth from the top of the deck, the 2♣ thirteenth from the top, and so on.

When ready to perform this mental routine, place the pack on the table before spectator #1. Tell him to cut about one-third of the deck off the top and place this packet back on the table, to the right side of the deck from your viewpoint. Then have spectator #2 cut off about half of the remainder of the deck (roughly one-third of the full deck) and place this packet back on the table, to the left side of the original deck. The situation from your view is indicated and labeled for clarity in figure 223.



Ask spectator #1 to pick up packet C, shuffle it thoroughly, and replace it in position on the table. Then have him look at the face of the top card of packet C and replace this card face down on top of packet C.

Turn to spectator #2. Say, “Look at the top card of your packet also.” As you talk, gesture toward packet A so he knows to look at the top card of this packet.

Ask spectator #1 to shuffle the middle packet, B, and replace it on the table. As an apparent afterthought, turn to spectator #2 and say, “You shuffle your packet also.” He shuffles packet A.

Have spectator #1 place packet B on top of packet C. When directing the spectator to do this, make sure you tell him to place the shuffled packet B on top of the *shuffled* packet C. This emphasizes the fact that all packets have been well mixed.

Have spectator #2 place his shuffled packet, A, on top of all. Ask the spectator to carefully square the deck. A location of either card seems impossible, even to the readers of this book, who *know* the deck was stacked at the beginning.

Remember that the spectators shuffled the deck, chose cards, and buried them in the deck while you were standing away from the deck. You could have been standing across the room. But while a solution seems impossible, there is a way to find the cards, a devious path to be sure, but one that leads to ultimate success.

Take the deck. Ask each spectator to concentrate on his card. Pretend to concentrate as you fan out the cards in your hand with the faces toward you. Look through the cards, beginning with the top (back) card of the deck and extending to about the seventeenth card, for the lowest-valued club. Suppose, for example, it is the 9♣. This will be spectator #2’s chosen card. Don’t reveal it yet. Just remember it.

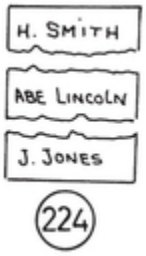
The *value* of this card tips the *location* of spectator # 1’s card. Simply add 10 to the value of spectator #2’s card. (If necessary, assign face-card values: Jack = 11, Queen = 12, King = 13.) You will arrive at the number 19, in our example (10 plus 9[♣]).

Beginning with the face (bottom) card of the deck, count in this many cards (19 cards in the example). The last card you count to is the one chosen by spectator # 1. It seems outrageous that this should work after all that shuffling, but it does, and since you now know the identity of both

cards, reveal them as dramatically as possible. This is one of the strongest tricks in the book. Make the most of it.

Living and Dead Test

This basic effect has been a staple in the mentalist's repertoire. In its simplest form, the routine uses a piece of paper torn into thirds. The names of living persons are written on two of the slips; the name of a dead celebrity is written on the third slip (figure 224). The slips are folded and dropped into a borrowed hat or paper bag.



The slips are mixed around by the spectator. The mentalist reaches into the hat or bag, and although he may be blindfolded, he succeeds in finding the slip containing the dead name.

Method: Examine the three slips shown in figure 224 and you will find that the center slip, the one on which the dead name is written, has two rough edges, whereas the other slips each have only one rough (or torn) edge.

Thus, you make sure the dead name is written on the center slip. After the slips are filled out, have them folded in half and dropped into a hat or paper bag. The spectator mixes the slips around. When you reach into the hat, all you need do is detect the slip that contains the two rough edges — easy to do by sense of touch.

This is the basic effect and it may seem transparently obvious in print. But properly presented it can be a dramatic and memorable effect. Note that by using a blindfold you lead the audience astray. They assume sense

of sight is necessary to find the right slip, whereas in fact it is sense of touch that does the work.

Two-Person Telepathy

A medium is someone who is sensitive to the mentalist's thoughts on a telepathic level. In most two-person acts, the medium is a lady who appears to have the uncanny ability to pick up thoughts under strict test conditions. A sample trick in this area uses an ordinary pack of cards.

A spectator cuts the face-down deck and completes the cut. He then takes the top card. A second spectator takes the next card. Each party notes and remembers his card. Then the first person replaces his card face down on top of the deck and the second likewise replaces his card on top. The deck is cut and the cut completed.

Now the deck is dealt into two piles by a spectator. He picks up the first pile, shuffles it, and hands it to the medium. She looks through the cards and immediately locates one of the chosen cards.

The second pile is shuffled, then handed to her. Immediately she locates the other chosen card. The deck is ordinary and may be kept by the audience. The mentalist never touches the deck and does not use a code.

The medium may be in another room when the cards are chosen. The choice of cards is not influenced, the location of both cards is completely random, yet the medium unerringly finds both cards. An impossible trick, so one must conclude that ESP is at work. How else could it be done?

Method: Well, by a simple method, which, correctly followed, leaves no doubt as to the identity of the chosen cards. Beforehand the cards are arranged so that the colors alternate red-black-red-black and so on throughout the deck. This is the only preparation.

Have the medium secured in another room. Then have the deck cut and have the cut completed by spectator #1. He takes the top card. Spectator #2 takes the next card. The first spectator replaces his card on top of the deck

without revealing it. Then spectator #2 replaces his card. The deck is cut and the cut completed.

One of the spectators alternately deals the deck into two piles, picks one pile, shuffles it, and brings the packet to the medium. With the faces of the cards toward her, she fans or spreads them. All of the cards in this packet will be one color, with one exception. This exception is the card chosen by one of the spectators. For example, perhaps the packet will consist of 25 black cards plus 1 red card. The single red card is one of the chosen cards.

Similarly, the other packet will contain 25 cards of the opposite color and a single card of contrasting color. That is, if the first packet was all black with one red card, the second packet will be all red with one black card. The one black card is the other chosen card.

After each card has been found, the two packets (or halves of the deck) are shuffled together by the mentalist and handed out for examination. The shuffle destroys the evidence of preparation, so the audience will find nothing unusual.

The Parity Principle

Four objects are used in this trick. We will assume they are four coins, but they can be any four objects. For example, the spectator can use a coin, a ring, a dollar bill, and a glass. But we will assume for this description that he is using four different coins. He arranges them in a row on the table and chooses one. When the mentalist turns his back, the spectator shifts the coins at random. Then the mentalist proceeds to eliminate coins one at a time from the row until a single coin remains. This coin will be the one that the spectator previously selected.

Method: This is an elaboration of a Bob Hummer principle, suggested by Jack Yates. The trick seems random, yet the principle involved is a cleverly concealed one that provides the mentalist with absolute control over the outcome. Assume four coins are arranged in a row on the table. Mentally designate the position of the coins as 1, 2, 3, 4. Ask the spectator

to indicate one coin as his chosen coin. Simply note whether it occupies an odd- or an even-numbered position in the row.

Turn your back. Instruct the spectator to make seven exchanges — each of the seven times exchanging the chosen coin with an adjacent coin. After he has made seven switches, the coins are hopelessly mixed. Or so it seems.

If the named coin was originally at an even position, it will now be at an odd position. Similarly, if the named coin was at an odd position originally, it will now be at an even position. You know this, but say nothing. Instead, concentrate a bit, then tell the spectator that you are going to eliminate coins one at a time. He is to follow your instructions exactly as you give them because you will be governed solely by tenuous telepathic waves that provide vague impressions. Means nothing, but the spectator will pay attention.

We will assume that the chosen coin was originally at an odd position and will carry through with this example accordingly. After seven switches have been made, the chosen coin will be at an even position, that is, either position 2 or 4. You don't know just which yet, but you do know that the chosen coin is not at position 1, so tell the spectator to remove the coin at position 1 and place it aside. You can't say, "Remove the coin at position one," because he doesn't know which coin you're talking about. Instead say, "Remove the coin at the far right and place it aside."

Ask him now to perform one more switch by exchanging his chosen coin with the coin adjacent to it. After he's done this, and completely unknown to him, his coin will *always* be the center coin of the row of three coins on the table.

Keep your back turned. Ask him to point to one of the end coins behind your back. Pause as if concentrating and say: "No, that isn't it. Point to the coin that was next to that coin. Just push it out of the row. I don't want to touch it." Stall for time, then say, "Yes, that is the coin you chose."

And it will be.

The trick can be done with four dimes of different dates, or four different playing cards. It can be done with four pieces of paper, each of a different color, or it can be done with four matchboxes, each containing a

different small object. To the average layman, the routine smacks of real telepathy since your back is turned at all times.

How to Predict the Super Bowl

Television's ability to reach into virtually every American home is superbly illustrated in the coverage given to major sports events like the World Series, championship heavyweight boxing matches, and the Super Bowl. Because of the saturation advertising used to promote such matches, and because of popular interest in sports generally, major sports contests draw tremendous numbers of home viewers — the total number sometimes reaching as high as fifty to sixty million viewers.

The last trick in this chapter, based on an idea of Richard Himber's, is a spectacular example of how you can predict the victor in *any* major sports event between two competing players or teams. It requires nerve and iron confidence (the mentalist's stock-in-trade), but the trick is not difficult and will give you a tremendous reputation as a seer.

The effect is impressive. Your prediction is sealed in an envelope and is on display throughout the game. When the game is finished, you open the envelope. Someone else removes the prediction. You never touch it. Yet when he reads it aloud, it is found that you have correctly predicted the winner of the World Series, the Super Bowl, or any other dual-competitor major sporting event.

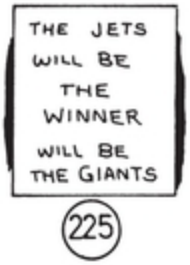
Remember that you never touch the prediction, never tamper with the sealed envelope. There is nothing ambiguous about the wording of the prediction. You hit it right on the nose with absolute precision. The method is relatively little known outside a small circle, and properly handled, it will establish your reputation for all time.

Method and Presentation: The secret is audacious. It works infallibly but you must have the thirst for glory that is the mark of the true hustler to pull it off. Complete, unwavering confidence is the key. If you fumble or stall at the wrong moment, the trick will fail. If you combine just the right degree of smugness with a certain elan that implies that defeat is

impossible, you will stun your audience. In short, this trick represents in microcosm all of the major ingredients of the monumentally successful mental feat.

Needed is an envelope and a file card that will just fit the envelope. The best plan here is to obtain a standard 3½”-by-6½” envelope from any stationery store, and a file card that is slightly larger. Trim the file card so that it is of a size to just fit the envelope snugly. What has been said thus far makes sense but doesn’t lead anywhere. What have a file card and an envelope got to do with predicting the Super Bowl?

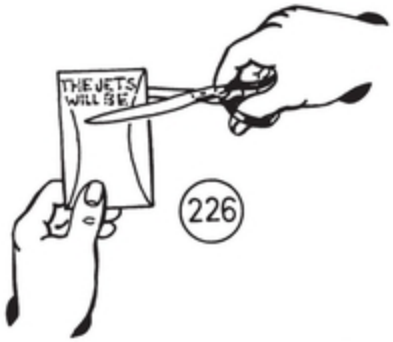
The demonic secret lies in the written wording of the prediction. The technique is shown in figure 225, which assumes a Jets-Giants Super Bowl for the sake of example. Insert the card in the envelope. Make sure the envelope is opaque, so that the wording can’t show through the envelope. Seal the envelope and place it in full view until Super Bowl Sunday.



225

Make sure one and all know about the prediction envelope. Have someone sign his name across the address-side of the envelope. Have someone else sign his name across the flap. Put the envelope in plain view and sit back to watch the game. You are relaxed because you can’t lose, but those around you will be crawling with suspense about the prediction sealed inside that envelope.

After the game, take the envelope and a pair of scissors. Let’s say the Giants won the Super Bowl. Hold the envelope as shown in figure 226 and cut off the upper end. This eliminates the Jets from the prediction and simultaneously converts the wording so that the prediction reads correctly.



Hand the envelope to a nearby friend. Have him check the signatures on the envelope to verify that you didn't switch envelopes. As he does this and removes the prediction, all attention will be on the prediction (figure 227). This gives you the opportunity to drop the cutoff end of the envelope into your pocket and thus get rid of the JETS part of the prediction. If anyone later asks to see the end of the envelope, you can remove it from your pocket — minus the portion of the file card that was inside it — and all checks out.

If the Jets win, cut off the bottom portion of the envelope (with the words WILL BE THE GIANTS), drop off the cutoff part in your pocket, and hand the prediction to the spectators. You can't lose, of course, because you're covered for either outcome, but take careful notice of the subtle way in which the prediction works. All attention is on the prediction inside the envelope, not on the small piece you cut off the end of the envelope and pocketed. Thus, as in all first-rate magic, audience attention is directed toward a safe target and away from the real secret. Guard the secret well and you will have a masterpiece of deception at hand for those rare occasions when you want to demonstrate a near miracle.

8

Comedy Magic

And then there's the story about the magician who said to his wife, "We've been married twenty years and it's been a pleasure having your brother living with us all that time." To this the wife replied: "My brother? I thought he was your brother!"

Or the one about the fellow who goes to a mind reader and asks, "When I die, will I go to Heaven?" The mind reader peers into her crystal ball and says finally: "I have good news and bad news. The good news is that when you die you will definitely go to Heaven. The bad news is that you're leaving tonight."

And the story about the young lady who wrote to an advice column in the local newspaper: "My boyfriend is a magician and his birthday is coming up. What do you think he would like?" The reply: "Never mind what he would like, get him a necktie."

Jokes, like magic tricks, set up a situation and then spring a surprise ending. Comedy magic is a combination of humor and magic. Like classic vaudeville comedy skits, either the comedy develops as part of an evolving situation, or the trick proceeds logically to a point but then springs an amusing surprise ending.

This chapter has been designed to provide the reader with a complete comedy act. The tricks and gags are arranged in proper sequence, but each can be used separately if the situation calls for it. Most of the tricks require something in the way of props, but the apparatus is not elaborate or expensive.

Comedy magicians collect gags, bits of business, and one-liners in much the same way that comedians do. If you are a born storyteller or a

budding magician, you can use your knowledge of comedy and delivery to infuse these routines with more laughs. Indeed, it may reach the point where the magic becomes the vehicle for the comedy. It has happened!

Nothing

The magician enters upon the stage to polite applause. He begins by saying that because he is a magician, he is accused of using his sleeves. He would like to make it plain, he further states, that there is nothing up his sleeves.

So saying, he reaches into his sleeve and produces a long sign (figure 228), which proves his contention. This bit of lunacy is John Murray's and it's an ideal opener. The longer the sign and the slower you pull or slide it out of the sleeve, the bigger the laugh.

Blackmailing the Enemy

There is bound to be someone in every audience who knows how all tricks are done. Usually he's wrong, but that does not stop him from voicing his suspicions. He is easy to spot because he will smirk at you from the moment you walk onstage. The best way to silence him is as follows. Invite him up to assist in a harmless trick involving a dime. The trick also involves an instant camera but you do not tell him about the camera.

Ask him to sit in a chair and tip his head back so that his forehead is horizontal — that is, parallel to the floor. Keeping his head in that position, he places a dime on the tip of his nose. The problem is to cause the dime to fall, while keeping his head still, by wiggling his nose.

Sooner or later he will accomplish the feat. When he does, congratulate him and innocently ask if he'd like to try another stunt with the dime.

Moisten the dime by dipping it in a glass of water. Ask him to face forward this time. Hand him the moistened dime and tell him to push it against his forehead so the dime sticks to his forehead. The problem now is to wrinkle his brow and cause the dime to fall. To make it harder, he must close his eyes.

As soon as he closes his eyes and contorts his face to cause the dime to fall off his forehead, pick up the camera and snap his picture. Develop the picture and show it to him. Because of the facial contortions, he looks like a maniac with a dime stuck to his forehead. His face will look so horrible that you can keep the picture and blackmail him to eternity.

In any event, when he sees how silly he looks in the photo, it is usually enough to keep him quiet through the rest of the performance.

The $30 TV Set

The magician remarks that in a shopping center near where he lives, “there is a television shop on one side of the street and a rival television shop on the other. Anxious to attract business, they started a price war. Finally one of the stores put up a sign in its window that said: ALL TV SETS NOW $30!”

As he talks, the magician shows two white cards that are blank on both sides. Then he writes the words ALL TV SETS Now $30! on one side of one card and shows it to the audience.

“The day after this sign appeared,” the magician continues, “a sign appeared in the rival’s store across the street.” He now separates the cards to reveal that a sign has mysteriously appeared on the second blank card. The sign reads: $30 TV SETS REPAIRED HERE!

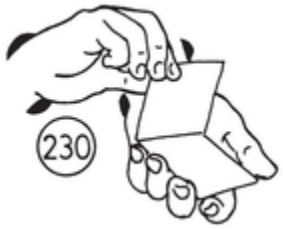
Method: This is a good example of how a simple gag or joke can be incorporated into a magical context. The punchline of the joke mysteriously appears on a card previously shown to be blank. There is humor in the punchline, combined with mystery as to how it got there.

Many people think that special invisible inks are the secret to tricks of this sort but the method is much easier. Two blank cards are used. They can be calling cards or file cards if working for a closeup audience. If working for a larger audience, use 9”-by-12” cards made from poster board.

There is some prior preparation. On one of the cards write $30 TV SETS REPAIRED HERE! in large block letters. Place this sign on the table, writing-side up, and place the blank sign on top of it. Square them up and you are ready to perform.

Hold the pair of cards squared in the left hand. Point to the blank face of the uppermost card. Then grasp both cards at the upper right corner (figure 229) and turn them over, end-over-end, in the direction of the arrow. As you do so, say: “These are the blank signs used by the two rivals. Nothing on the outside.”

Take the top card between right thumb and first finger and transfer it to the bottom of the packet. Square the packet, then lift the upper card bookwise (figure 230) and say, “Nothing on the inside.”



Drop the top blank card onto the other card and square both of them up. As far as the audience is concerned, both cards are completely blank. On the top surface of the top card write ALL TV SETS Now $30! This is done

at the appropriate point in the routine. Lift the left hand so the audience can see the sign (figure 231). Then take this card with the right hand and slide it under the other card.

Remark that the rival owner across the street stayed up all night to think of a way to thwart the other fellow. Obviously he couldn't lower the price of his television sets below $30 because of the disastrous economic consequences. Then he got an idea. Snap your fingers and lift the top card to reveal the punchline on the inside face of the top card.

The cards may be left with the audience at the finish, but as a general rule it is not wise to hand apparatus to the audience for examination. It slows the pace, for one thing. For another, if you pass around the props for one routine, the audience will assume that you're going to pass out the props for every other trick. This is not always possible to do since gimmicks are sometimes used. Rather than be inconsistent, the best plan is not to hand anything out.

Comedy Coke in the Hat

Here's a classic comedy effect using a borrowed hat, a paper drinking cup, and a bottle of cola. The borrowed hat is placed mouth up on the table. The magician admits he isn't too sure how to do this trick but he's willing to experiment (long pause) with someone else's hat.

"Let's see," he says. "You put the paper cup in the hat . . . No, you put the cup on the table and the cola in the hat." He places the drinking cup on the table and proceeds to pour the bottle of cola directly into the borrowed hat!

“No, the cup must go into the hat first. It’s common sense.” He stops pouring cola into the hat and peers into the hat. A look of ill-concealed fright comes over his face. “This trick is a mess if you don’t get it exactly right,” he says. The spectator whose hat was borrowed will usually acknowledge either by groaning or fainting in the aisle.

“Well here, there’s no harm in doing it over and over until I get it right.” The magician places the paper cup into the hat. Then he finishes pouring the bottle of cola into the hat. The cola bottle is then placed aside.

Addressing the spectator who loaned him the hat, the magician says, “I’m really sorry about all this.” (Pause, followed by sly smile.) “Of course you didn’t believe I would actually destroy your hat.” The magician reaches into the hat, removes the paper cup full of cola and drinks it. The hat is tipped up to show the inside. The hat is completely unharmed and is returned to the owner amid applause and laughter.

Method: The method and preparation involve two paper cups. Seven-ounce cups are about right. Remove the bottom from one cup and trim off the rim (lip), so you are left with a cup-shaped tube, open at top and bottom (figure 232). Slide this open cone into the other cup to conceal it and you are ready to perform.

Borrow a hat, preferably a man’s fedora. If such a hat is not available, borrow a lady’s hat. Just make sure it is deep enough to accommodate a 7-ounce cup.

Presentation: Place the hat brim-up on the table. Open a bottle of cola. State that you’re not certain how the trick works, adding hopefully, “Practice makes perfect.”

Place the double cup into the hat in an upright position, saying, “Let’s see, first we place the cup into the hat.” Act puzzled and say, “No, we put

the cup on the table." The right hand reaches into the hat, slides out the open cone (figure 233), and places that on the table. This leaves the real cup inside the hat, unknown to the audience.

"It's the cola we place in the hat." Pour the cola into the hat. To the audience it appears as if the cola is actually going directly into the hat, but in fact you pour it into the cup.

When the cup is about half full, stop and say, "No, of course the cup has to go into the hat first." Peer into the hat, shake your head and say, "What a mess." Now pick up the open cone, which the audience thinks is the cup, and slide it down into the cup already in the hat.

Finish pouring the cola into the cup. Then place the bottle aside. Lift the cup out of the hat and drink the cola. Then tip the hat up to show it is empty and unharmed. This is a surprising outcome and brings automatic applause.

Note that all the way through the trick until the very end the magician makes seeming mistakes and appears to be in trouble. The spectator whose hat is being used is in anguish. The situation looks hopeless, but the magician brings it off with a surprising finish. The trick has all the ingredients of situation comedy plus magic and is a staple in the acts of many magicians.

A Big Card

A spectator chooses a card, say the A♠, and returns it to the deck. The spectator himself shuffles the deck so that the chosen card is genuinely lost in the deck.

The magician says: “Through mental abilities I’ve developed over the years — abilities too numerous to mention, abilities that would boggle the mind and drive sane men mad — through the use of these fantastic abilities and a humble manner, I will endeavor to find this gentleman’s chosen card without looking at the deck.”

The shuffled deck is taken and dropped into a paper bag. “Behold, my hand is empty but exceedingly well trained. I will reach into the bag and by a sense of touch keenly honed through practice of certain Egyptian rites, I will seek out and find this gentleman’s chosen card. Please do not applaud, as it will only break my train of concentration.”

The magician reaches into the bag, removes a card, and tosses it aside as being the wrong card. He removes another card and is again wrong. “I’m getting low-valued cards,” he says. Then, turning to the spectator who chose a card, the magician says: “Your card was not a low card. It was a high card, a big card?” The spectator says yes.

The magician then reaches into the bag and removes a *giant* Ace of Spades. “As I suspected,” he mutters. “You chose the biggest card in the deck.” The spectator again acknowledges, usually with a smile. He did choose the A♠, but not the giant Ace just taken from the bag. It is obvious the giant Ace was in the bag all along, but it is not obvious how this happened to coincide with the selected card.

“You see how easy it is,” the magician says. “Merely by a process of elimination, a brilliant mind, good looks, and superstar potential, I found. your card.” He picks up the paper bag. “Having found your card, we won’t need the rest of the deck.” He then tears the bag open and continues tearing it to shreds. The entire deck has vanished from inside the bag!

Method: This excellent routine is Don Nielsen’s elaboration on an idea of Milbourne Christopher’s. A good deal of space was devoted to proper presentation above because it is important to see the trick as the audience sees it. The magician acts the part of one gifted with incredible powers, but in an exaggerated, comical way so the audience knows he’s kidding. The production of the giant Ace of Spades is an amusing sight gag, but then the trick takes a startling turn when the entire deck vanishes. The vanish is so strong and unexpected that it automatically signals applause.

As to how it’s done: the giant card is made from white poster board. It should measure about 9” by 12”. Round the corners, sketch in a picture of the Ace of Spades on one side, and fill in the sketch with black ink.

On the back of the card fasten with tape an open card case as shown in figure 234. The back of the giant card is never seen by the audience. When this preparation is complete, place the giant card into a paper bag large enough to hold it. The bag stands open and upright on your table until you’re ready to perform.

234

Have the normal-size A♠ on top of a regular face-down deck of cards. To perform the routine, ask a spectator to name a number between 1 and 10. Say he names 8. Tell him you want him to deal eight cards off the top of the deck. To illustrate, you deal eight cards face down off the top into a heap. Then replace the heap on top of the deck.

Hand the deck to the spectator. Ask him if 8 is his lucky number. Whatever his reply, remark that sometimes a person will pick a number that could become a very lucky number for him. If his chosen number was in fact 8 as in our example, have him deal eight cards off the top of the deck, dealing one card at a time. Stop him on the eighth card and have him look at it. The card will be the A♠.

Ask him to show the card to the rest of the audience but not to you and replace it in the deck. Then have him shuffle the deck thoroughly so no one knows the location of the chosen card.

Take back the deck and go through the presentation described earlier. As you do, and while supposedly placing the deck into the bottom of the paper bag, slip the deck into the card case taped behind the giant card.

Build up the claim to having amazing powers that baffle scientists. Then reach into the bag, remove a card from the cased deck, glance at it, and

shake your head. Pocket the card, saying it's the wrong card. Remove another card, shake your head again, and pocket this card as well. Don't let the audience see the faces of the cards you remove and pocket.

Turn to the spectator and say: "I'm getting low-valued cards, but your card was a high card, wasn't it? A big card." The spectator will say yes, and you add, "The biggest card in the deck."

Reach into the bag and remove the giant Ace of Spades. The spectator did in fact choose the A♠, and the appearance of the giant Ace will always produce laughter.

Place the giant Ace aside, behind some other object on your table, taking care not to flash the back of the card. Then say: "Since I found your card, I won't need the bag. Or the rest of the deck." Tear the bag open, then tear it to shreds. The complete vanish of the deck is a strong magical ending to a very good comedy routine.

In presenting the routine your outrageous claims to supernatural powers should be exaggerated just enough to signal the fact that it is all meant in fun. From there on the routine itself offers a fine vehicle for laughs and mystery.

Words, Words, Words

In the magic fraternity Sid Lorraine's name is known around the world and is synonymous with clever routines and humorous patter. The following routine, based on a Rupert Slater idea in the British publication *Magic Wand,* is not magical in the strict sense of the word, but it is a funny bit of business based on an ingenious premise.

The effect is this: Using a school slate, the performer shows the word STARLING has been chalked on it in large letters. Figure 235 shows the simple apparatus. After a gag or two, one letter is erased and the remaining letters are seen to form a different word. The performer continues to remove letters one at a time; each time a new word is formed and an appropriate gag used to accompany the new word.

235

The process is continued until the slate is blank and you bow to the applause.

Method: In a routine of this kind the gag material is of special importance because the routine succeeds or fails solely on that basis. You will find this an excellent example of comedy material that requires only good delivery to bring laughs.

The slate should be about 18” long and about 6” wide. Slates are available in a variety of shapes and sizes in department stores. If you’d rather, you can use a piece of poster board cut to the desired size; prepare it by giving it several coats of flat black paint. Even easier is to use large blank cards. Print a letter on each card and mount the cards in a simple stand, as shown in figure 236. With this approach, instead of erasing a letter from the slate each time, you would simply remove a card from the stand each time.

236

In the following description we’ll assume that the slate is used.

Presentation: “This is the school slate that I used in my old school days. It still has an old spelling lesson on it.”

Display the slate so the audience can see the word. “By the way, you may think this an odd shape for a slate. It was necessary at the school I

attended. It was a very *low* school. I wasn't as lucky as the children of today who go to *high* schools."

Point to the word on the slate. "I suppose you are aware that the starling is a very noisy bird. If we rub out the L like this, it is interesting to learn that we're left with another word, STARING. This is a rude habit but it doesn't bother magicians. They're used to people staring at them. For example, whenever I do magic, people stare at me and say, 'You get *paid* for that?'

"Now if we rub out the A we get the word STRING. In case you don't know, string is the stuff that stretches in a straight line from end to end, unless you're tying a parcel, in which case it's always two inches too short.

"If we take away the R we end up with STING, which, as any student of English knows, is the present participle of the subjunctive isosceles *stung,* which in turn is the valvular modifier of the plebian critical term *stink.* But enough of that.

"When we take away the T we wind up with SING. This is *singular.* The plural of *sing* is *Sing Sing.* It may be of passing interest to mention that Sing Sing is the only prison where they will not allow magicians to perform. It seems a magician entertained there years ago. The prisoners kicked up a fuss because they claimed it wasn't in their sentence.

"Rubbing away the G leaves us with SIN. I'm sure I don't have to explain *this* word, but just in case someone doesn't know the meaning, Sin is a very expensive perfume.

"When the S is removed we are left with IN. This is not the sort of *inn* you go *in,* in order to *pass out.* This is more like the *in-* you find outside of *ferior, come tax,* and *hibitions.*

"If we take away the N from IN, only 1 remains. It happens that 1 is me, and just why *I* should remain, I haven't the slightest idea. So, I'll rub myself out and say *Goodnight!"*

The IQ Test

You can close with Sid Lorraine's routine and then use "The IQ Test" as an encore. The premise is one of the funniest in the literature, a perfect combination of magic, mystery, and laughs deriving from an increasingly ludicrous situation. If you have natural comedic ability, this routine will bring the house down.

The trick is best done before an audience of both children and adults. Ask for the assistance of a father and son pair who will compete in a guessing game. The winner will get a prize.

Display a hatful of folded pieces of paper. Explain that there is a question written on each slip of paper. Each player gets ten chips. A question is drawn at random from the hat. If the player can answer the question, he gets one poker chip from the other player. If he can't, he loses a chip to the other player.

The players take turns. The questions in the hat can be mixed at any time. It's all fair and honest, right? Would it be in this book if it were fair and honest?

The game *seems* innocent at first, but as the game develops, it becomes apparent that the boy is winning and his father is losing. It is not just that the father is losing, but he is losing horribly, he is being crushed, devastated, and beaten on every round and is completely helpless to change the outcome. It is as if his son has suddenly been blessed with amazingly good luck because the boy gets questions like "Who was the George Washington Bridge named after?" while his father gets nightmarish questions like "Name the co-inventors of the calculus," or "In what keys were the Bach double-violin concertos written?" or "What is the distance, in light years, between Earth and Rigel?"

The questions asked of the boy keep getting easier, while the questions asked of his father keep getting more impossible, until, finally, the boy emerges triumphant and wins the prize. At family gatherings, at Father-and-Son Night at the local lodge, or at shows before a general audience, the routine can be counted on to bring tremendous applause and laughter from the audience.

Method: As far as I'm aware, the basic concept of this routine is an idea of Lu Brent's. A marketed routine built around a spelling-bee theme was devised by Frank Lane. Sid Lorraine and others have published routines also. The following is the author's handling of the basic premise, somewhat simplified for inclusion in this book.

Since each player gets ten poker chips at the start, and since the winning player on each round gets one of the other player's poker chips, it requires only five easy questions and five difficult questions to allow one player to best the other by collecting all the poker chips.

The five easy questions are written on separate slips of paper. The easy questions are:

1. Who was the George Washington Bridge named after?

2. What is the color of the White House?

3. Who wears a cape, is able to leap tall buildings at a single bound, and worked for a great metropolitan newspaper under the name of Clark Kent?

4. What makes the ocean salty?

5. What was Abraham Lincoln's first name?

Fold each slip in half and then in quarters and place the five folded slips aside for the moment.

The difficult questions are as follows. (Each is written on a separate slip of paper. Since each question is difficult, and since few people are likely to know the answers, the answers are given in parentheses, but only for the reader's information. Don't let either contestant see the answers.)

1. Identify the following sites: Island of Reil, McBurney's Point, and the Tunnel of Corti. (All three are parts of the human body.)

2. Which of the following organizations was the first to be founded in America: the Boy Scouts, the Red Cross, or the Salvation Army? (None: the Scouts and the Salvation Army were founded in England; the Red Cross was founded in Switzerland.)

3. What goes: “Ha Ha Ha Plop”? (Someone laughing his head off.)

4. What is the distance in light years between Earth and Rigel? (Rigel is in the Orion cluster, about 1,800 light years from Earth.)

5. In one minute or less, name 100 words which do not contain the letters A, B, C, J, K, M, P, Q, or Z. (All the spectator has to do to satisfy the conditions of this question is count aloud from 1 to 100.)

Fold each of these slips and place them in a separate pile on the table. The only other requirement is a man’s fedora hat.

To prepare, gather the five difficult questions in a packet and place them down into one compartment (formed by the crease in the crown) of the hat, as shown in figure 237. Hold them in place with the right hand, as shown in the drawing. Take the five easy questions and drop them one at a time into the hat, so they lie loosely inside the hat.

Presentation: The presentation should now be obvious. Tip the hat forward so the audience can see that it contains a number of loose slips of paper. Invite up a father and son to participate. Give each player ten poker chips.

After the rules are explained, give the boy a chance to mix the slips in a hat. Reach in and remove one of the loose slips with the left hand. Open it and read the question aloud. The boy has no trouble answering the question, so he wins one of his father's poker chips.

Hold the hat up and have the father mix the remaining slips. Then you reach into the hat — but reach into the compartment held from the outside by the right hand — and remove one of the difficult questions. Open it with the left hand and read the question to the father. Chances are that he can't answer the question, so he loses a poker chip to his son.

Continue in this manner, giving the easy questions to the son and the hard questions to the father. Don't just read off each question to the boy. Ask him if he's ready, if he thinks he can handle it. Then read the question — for example, "What color is the White House?" Caution him to take his time. Ask him if he wants a glass of water or a chair to rest on. When he answers, pat him on the back, shake his hand and say: "The boy's a genius, a mental giant. Let's have a round of applause for this young Einstein."

When you get to the father, change your style. Act forlorn, as if the whole thing is doomed. Before asking the father the question, glance at it, shake your head sadly, and tell him he can quit right off and there would be no shame attached to his backing away, nothing in the newspapers to indicate the upset victory by his own son. Increase the sense of doom with each question. The audience will laugh uproariously. When they do, turn to them and say, "Anyone with ordinary common human decency would not laugh at a man losing as badly as this man is losing."

Turn to the father and add: "Sir, I apologize for the way this game is turning out. No doubt it's what we call beginner's luck, just plain beginner's luck."

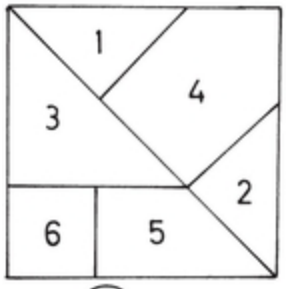
The father knows it's anything but beginner's luck, yet he's powerless to change the game. The boy finally wins. Award him the prize. Given the right presentation, this routine will be the highlight of any magician's act.

The "Oh" Puzzle

The closing comedy item is offered as a bonus. It is admittedly a puzzle and not a magical effect, but it has several features that make it appropriate to this chapter. First, it is not merely a puzzle but a complete routine. Second, it is a routine that becomes progressively funnier. Third, and most important, it is one of those fiendish creations that warms the heart of the truly maniacal puzzle fan.

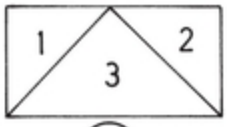
The routine was devised by Bill Elliott and originally appeared in the Canadian magazine *Ibidem.* It is published here more or less as Bill Elliott originally described it so that the satanic presentation may be savored by newcomers.

Trace and cut out the actual pieces of the puzzle as shown (numbered for identification purposes only) in figure 238. Place pieces 1, 2, and 3 in your right trouser pocket, pieces 4 and 5 in your right jacket pocket, and piece 6 in your left trouser pocket. Now then . . .



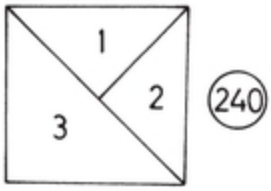
238

This noggin-buster was devised for the sort of fiend who likes to drive people mad with puzzles. First you must find a victim. Hand him segments 1, 2, and 3 from your right trouser pocket, and tell him that his mission is to form a square. To get him off on the wrong track, arrange the pieces as in figure 239, explaining that this is quite unacceptable because it is a rectangle but not a square.



239

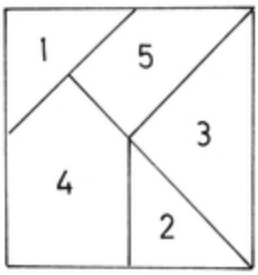
Unless your victim is slow, or unless your intimidation caused the wretch to panic, he should reach the obvious solution (figure 240) in short order. On the other hand, he might go so far as to imply that only crass stupidity would cause anyone to imagine that so simple a device could qualify as a difficult puzzle. If so, don't let this throw you. You've just set him up.



240

"Oh!" you exclaim. "I forgot to give you the other two pieces. How could I be so stupid. You must form a square with the five pieces." Reach into your right jacket pocket, remove pieces 4 and 5, and add them to pieces 1, 2, and 3.

The puzzle now assumes new proportions. It is no longer a pushover, although sooner or later the plugger will succeed, producing the result shown in figure 241. When his face finally glows with the ecstasy of success, don't belittle the achievement. Congratulate him.



241

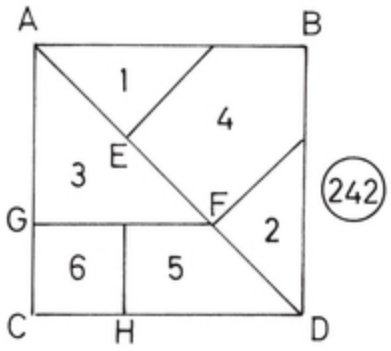
"You've done it! You've really done it! This is the first time I've ever found anyone who could get those six pieces into a square so quickly."

"Six pieces?" he'll ask in dismay.

"Six pieces! Come now, you haven't gone south with that sixth piece, have you? That's hardly cricket. You haven't?"

Pause. Then say: “Oh! It’s my fault again. I forgot to give you the sixth piece. Now where did I leave it. Ah, here it is in my pocket. A tiny square. All you have to do, of course — you’ve practically done it now — is to add this tiny square to your big square and make a really big square. . . . Nothing to it now!” The exhortation of a true sadist.

If you wish to make the puzzle in a size larger than that depicted in figure 238, here’s how to make it: First, draw a large square. Then draw diagonal A to D as indicated in figure 242.



242

Trisect the diagonal AD at E and F to produce a diagonal with three equal segments (AE, EF, FD). At E, erect a perpendicular to meet AB; at F erect a perpendicular to meet BD.

From F, draw a line parallel to CD, to meet AC at G. Finally, drop a perpendicular from GF to meet CD at H so that CH equals GC, and cut out the pieces.

9

Gambling Secrets

Gambling is probably the third or fourth oldest profession. The desire to take a chance, to play a hunch, to gamble on the outcome of a hazardous situation, is as old as humanity. Artifacts found in ancient caves suggest that a crude form of the three-shell game was in operation at the dawn of history. Different forms of this game appear to be part of the tradition of even the oldest cultures in every area of the world.

Arrows or pointed sticks were used in the earliest games and were related to the mysteries of divination. It is believed that cards and board games like chess developed from these mystic rituals. The tossing of arrows or rolling logs may also have been the forerunner of dice. In the Bible one reads of the "casting of lots," a process used to determine the outcome of events between rivals. Early Egyptian sculpture depicts primitive forms of checkers and a game called *more* that is still played.

The oldest known playing cards date from about 1000 A.D. They were oriental in origin and probably derived from the design of paper money. Over the centuries the substance and design of playing cards has varied — from oblong strips of oiled paper 7" long, to circular Persian cards, to the highly finished, easy-to-handle cards in use today.

As the technology of playing-card manufacture improved, it became easier to handle cards, and easy card handling paved the way for secret means of controlling the deck. Concepts related to cheating were reasonably well developed in Robert-Houdin's time. The classic text on the subject, S. W. Erdnase's *Expert at the Card Table,* published in 1898, was a landmark in the publication of gambling texts. Continuously available in numerous editions over the past three-quarters of a century, it is still considered the card hustler's primer.

Cheating at cards combines aspects of fancy talk, the fast hustle, the sucker bet, and excursions into pure skill. Professionals can deal from the bottom or the center, they can perform false shuffles like the push-through and pull-through, they can cull, stack, cop, switch, load, and unload cards as easily as average mortals tie their shoes.

Like all professionals who work the other side of the street, gamblers talk in an impenetrable code all their own. There is paper and shade, the peg and the punch, the cooler and the package. When a gambler puts work into a deck, he is not talking about manual labor. He can deal seconds and thirds, palm with either hand, run up two, three, or more hands, cut the Aces, go in with crimps or edgework, perform partial strip-outs, shift the cut or rig the shuffle. He knows about sandbagging and check cop, about glimpses, peeks, nailing, waving, and daub. He can deal from the base, the brief, or the box. He knows the advantage of the line, the trim, the block-out, and the sort.

In sum, you have no chance against the professional because there is no element of chance in his game. He has a lock on the deck and there is no defense unless you are another professional. The best and only advice you need to remember comes down to this: unless you enjoy losing, don’t play the other man’s game.

The object of this chapter is two-fold. First, the reader will become acquainted with the so-called proposition bet, a bet that looks like a sure thing for the mark (or sucker), but always results in his losing everything including his shirt. Second, the reader will learn a number of gambling demonstrations that give the appearance of skill but which are actually self-working.

Proposition bets and gambling demonstrations alternate in this chapter, the idea being that they lend atmosphere to one another and will teach the reader how to present such material. The flavor of the presentation is different from that of magic because you are *expected* to use polished skill, not sorcery, in gambling demonstrations. The tricks and bets in this chapter might well be combined as a mini-lecture or expose of gambling methods. In fact you expose nothing, but the various deals, hustles, and bets appear to demand great skill and knowledge at games of chance.

Ace-Deuce-Jack

This is a proposition bet and one of the most ruthless. Give the player twenty or thirty poker chips and give yourself about a dozen. Have him shuffle and then cut the deck. Finally tell him to cut the deck into three face-down packets on the table.

He bets two or three poker chips and you match his bet. The game is this: if an Ace, Deuce, or Jack appears at the bottom (face) of any of the three piles, the player loses. Otherwise, he wins. It is a very simple game, and since the gambler can win on only three cards (Ace, Deuce, Jack) and will lose on all the rest, the game seems a sure thing for the player.

Phrases like “sure thing” mean that the player will be taken to the cleaners. In “Ace-Deuce-Jack” he will lose on almost every round. Remember that on each round the player shuffles and cuts the deck, then cuts it into three heaps. There is no chance of cheating, and no need to cheat, because the “work” lies in the odds. Since the player loses if an Ace, Deuce, or Jack appears at the bottom of any of the three packets, the chances of one of these cards coming up is much greater than it first appears. Over the long run the player must lose.

The game affords a graphic display of the gambler at work in his best element. The fact that the player’s large pile of poker chips steadily dwindles is mute but dramatic testimony to the audience that you cannot win at the other man’s games.

Since you do not handle the cards but almost always win, there is an intriguing way of presenting “Ace-Deuce-Jack” as a game in which you cheat by remote control. Thus, by pretending that you are cheating without even touching the cards, the audience will — strange as it may seem — actually give you credit for possessing gambling skills of an astounding nature. “He never touched the cards,” they will say afterwards, and that’s right — because you didn’t have to touch the cards to win.

Build Down

This routine, the invention of Allan Slaight (based on an idea of Tom Ransom's), shows off the dealer's ability to win repeatedly at draw poker. It leads logically to the following game, "The Ten-Card Deal," a famous swindle that allows you to cheat even though the player shuffles and deals the cards.

As the audience sees it, the gambler deals five poker hands. After showing the other four hands, the gambler turns up his own hand and shows that he has won decisively.

The winning hand is discarded. The remaining cards are dealt into four poker hands. The dealer wins again. His winning hand is discarded, and the remaining cards are dealt into three poker hands. This time the dealer wins with the four Aces.

Method: The deck is stacked in such a way that the dealer wins on each round, even though a different number of cards are used for each game. From the top down the *stack* (or setup) is as follows: 5♥-9♣-A♥-3♦-8♦-7♦-A♣-5♠-9♦-8♠-9♠-6♦-J♥-A♦-8♥-5♣-9♥-5♦-10♦-8♣-J♦-A♠-J♣-4♦

Place the stack atop the deck and deal five face-down hands of five cards each — a card at a time to each player, in rotation from left to right — in the conventional fashion. After the deal, place the deck aside. Show each of the first four player's hands, and turn each hand face down. Then show that the dealer wins easily with four Eights.

Say, "I don't want to get a good hand like this again, so I'll discard it." Place the dealer's winning hand face down on top of the deck. Then, without disturbing the order of the cards in each of the other hands, collect them face down, placing the first hand on the left on top of the second, these two on top of the third, and this combined packet on top of the fourth hand.

Say, "We have just twenty cards left, enough to deal four hands." Deal four hands of draw poker in the usual manner — a card to each player in turn, with yourself as the fourth player.

Show each of the hands dealt to the three players and turn them face down again in order. Then show your hand. You have won with a straight

flush. Discard your winning hand by placing it face down on top of the deck.

Collect the remaining hands by dropping the first hand on top of the second and this combined packet on top of the third. Say, “With just fifteen cards, we have enough to deal out three hands.”

Deal three hands — the third hand going to yourself. Show each of the player’s hands, and turn them face down in order as before, then show that you win with four Aces. This concludes the “Build Down” routine, but it is a very strong lead-in to the next demonstration, so with the cards in front of you, read on.

The Ten-Card Deal

Having just completed “Build Down,” discard the hand containing the four Aces. This leaves you with two poker hands on the table. Place the second hand on top of the first. If the 10♦ is the bottom or face card of the combined packet, all is well and you can proceed with a classic gambler’s hustle.

Place the ten cards on top of the deck. Say, “Of course when the dealer handles the cards all the time, you can expect that he has complete control over the deck. Let’s make it fair. I’m down to ten cards. I’ll let you shuffle and deal them.”

Quickly push off the top nine cards of the deck, calling them ten, and hand them to the spectator. Tell him to shuffle and cut them as often as he likes. While he shuffles the cards, place the balance of the deck on the table in front of him.

When he has finished shuffling the packet, tell him to drop it face down on top of the deck and square the deck. “You’ve shuffled the cards,” you tell the spectator. “Now I’d like you to deal out two hands of poker, a card at a time. This time I’m the player and you’re the dealer.”

The spectator deals out two hands in the conventional manner. Then say: “Even though you shuffled and dealt, I always win.” Turn over both hands and show that regardless of who got what, you did indeed win the round.

The swindle can be repeated. Without disturbing the order of the cards, drop his hand face down on top of the deck, then your hand. The 10♦ (known as the *Jonah card* in this hustle) must be the tenth card from the top of the deck for the deal to work. It will be in correct position if you followed the above instructions properly.

Quickly push off the top nine cards and have them shuffled. The spectator won't realize that he holds nine cards instead of ten. Have him mix them thoroughly and drop them on top of the deck. He deals two hands and loses again. The result is completely mystifying and will particularly haunt the seasoned player who knows that such an outcome is flatly impossible if he shuffles and deals.

A Dice Proposition

Three dice are used in this proposition bet. The gambler gets one die and the mark gets the other two. *Before* the mark rolls his two dice, the gambler places his die on the table with a particular number up.

The mark then rolls his two dice. If the uppermost number on any two dice, or all three dice, totals 7, the gambler wins. Otherwise he loses.

It appears to be an honest bet since the gambler obviously doesn't know how the two dice held by the mark will come up after they've been rolled. But if the gambler puts his die on the table with the 1-spot showing, he will win 5 out of 9 times on the average.

When the mark tires of losing, offer to turn the bet around. Give him your die so that now he holds all three dice. Tell him to roll the three dice. If a total of 7 shows on any two dice, or all three, he wins. Otherwise he loses.

It looks like a new game but the mark will take a bath on this form of the bet too. As an even-money wager, it's money in the bank.

Decoy Dice

The dice proposition just described introduces dice as a prop that can be exploited in a unique way. This stunt is a favorite with gambling expert John Scarne.

"Although cards and dice are the most popular apparatus in gambling games, they are seldom used in conjunction with one another," the gambler says. "If you think about it, there are few games which use both cards and dice. The reason is that they exert an odd influence over one another."

Two dice and a shuffled deck are used. The spectator removes six cards. The balance of the deck is discarded. Hand him the two dice and turn your back. Invite him to roll the two dice and note the number uppermost on *one* die.

Now have him count down to that number in the packet and note the card at that number. For example, if he rolled a 5 with one of the dice, he might remember the fifth card in the packet. Remind him to leave the cards in the same order as they were originally. He is not to disturb the order of the cards when he counts, and he is to count silently.

After he's noted a card, tell him to pick up the die with his noted number on it and drop the die in his pocket.

When he says "ready," you turn around and say, "The remaining die cannot possibly give me any clue as to the card you chose, because I don't know which number originally showed on the die now hiding in your pocket, right?" The spectator agrees. Take the packet of 6 cards from him and place them behind your back, saying: "I shall attempt to locate your card by means of advanced gambling techniques. Then I'll relocate your card in the packet."

With the packet face down behind your back, secretly transfer a number of cards from bottom to top; the number is determined by the number showing on the top face of the die on the table. If the top number is a 3, transfer three cards.

Place the packet on the table. Say: "Now bring the die out of your pocket. Set it next to the other die, but with the original number uppermost." When the spectator has done this, say, "For the first time I know the total of the numbers originally thrown, right?"

Taking the total of the two numbers showing uppermost on the two dice, transfer that many cards from top to bottom of the packet, dealing the cards one at a time.

"Now you will see for the first time why cards and dice are not used in gambling games. The affinity is too strong." The final card of the count is turned face up and proves to be the chosen card.

The Red-Black Swindle

This fair-seeming game was proposed by Martin Gardner. The player removes two red and two black cards from the deck, places them under the table and mixes them up. Then he places one of the four cards face up on top of the table.

Of the three remaining cards, he draws one. If it matches the color of the face-up card on the table, the player wins. Otherwise he loses. Since only two reds and two blacks are used, there is an honest even-money chance that the player can win or lose on each round. That's only the way it seems. The truth is that statistically he will lose two out of three times.

How to Cut the Aces

In books, plays, and movies that involve gamblers even as minor characters, chances are that you will see the gambler cut to the four Aces. (He may also deal a Royal Flush, but we will defer the details on that until the end of this chapter.) Generally it requires considerable skill and constant practice to be able to cut to any desired cards in the deck. But there are methods that achieve the desired end without skill or gimmicks, and some look very close to the real thing.

One such variation is the following. It is in part based on ideas of Charles Jordan and Martin Gardner. It uses an ordinary deck, no special cards, and no sleight of hand. Even as a demonstration of Ace cutting, it is out of the ordinary because *the spectator* cuts to all four Aces!

Method and Presentation: At the start all four Aces must be secretly brought to the top of the deck. If you're using your own deck, get the Aces to the top, put the deck in its case, and leave the cased deck in your pocket until ready to perform this routine.

Also needed is a tray of some kind to hold the cards. The tray should measure about 9" by 12". It is used to hold the cards so that the performer need never touch the deck. If a tray is not available you can use a piece of heavy cardboard, a book, or any firm, portable surface that will hold four packets of cards.

You are seated at a table, the tray is in front of you on the table, and the deck of cards rests on the tray. There is a spectator seated directly across the table from you, and there is a spectator seated on your side of the table, directly to your left. These two spectators are going to participate in the swindle: it is they who will seemingly cut to the Aces.

Remove the deck from its case. Place the card case aside on the table — it won't be used. Say to the spectator on your left: "Somewhere in this deck are the four Aces. If I tried to cut to an Ace, you might accuse me of using magnets, atomic energy, or some other well-known secret device. That's why I want you to supervise the demonstration."

Drop the deck near the center of the tray. Place the tray in front of the spectator seated on your left. Ask him to cut off about half the deck and place the cutoff portion to the left (his left) of the balance of the deck, as shown in figure 243. Packet A in figure 243 is the original top half of the deck.

Thank the spectator for his assistance thus far. Congratulate him on the way he handled the cards. Then scrutinize the two packets, as if comparing them, and say, "Let's even them up a little." Pick up the top card of packet A and place it on top of packet B.

Study the two packets again as if still not satisfied. Then again pick up the top card of packet A and place it on top of packet B. Act satisfied, and comment, “The packets are more evenly balanced now.” In fact you’ve transferred two Aces from the top of packet A to the top of packet B, so that there are now two Aces on top of each packet.

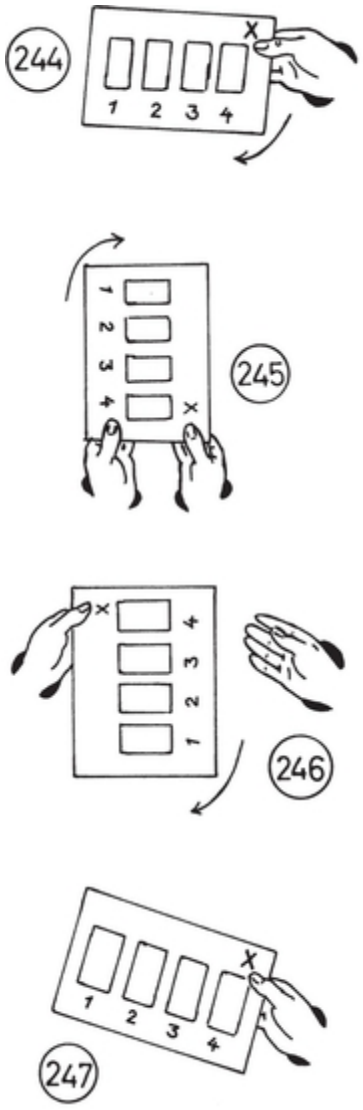
Ask the same spectator to cut off about half of packet B and place it in position 4 (figure 243) on the tray. Act pleased and say: “I think you’re getting the knack of it now. Excellent card handling, really outstanding.”

Ask the spectator on your left to cut off about half of packet A and place it in position 2 on the tray. When he’s done this, act shocked, amazed and gratified at seeing such card control. Shake your head. Mutter something like, “I’ve seen only one other man who . . .” Let your voice trail off as if too amazed to speak further. The spectator doesn’t know what you’re talking about but he will soon enough.

There are four packets on the tray. The spectator seated to your left is now instructed as follows: “Counting from your left, there are four packets and they are in positions 1, 2, 3, 4. I’d like you to remove the top card of the packets at positions 2 and 4.”

He does this and holds onto these two cards without looking at them. You are now going to turn the tray around and hand it to the spectator seated across the table from you. But it is here that a subtle ploy of Martin Gardner’s comes into play. You must follow this with apparatus in hand to appreciate the clever swindle at work here.

You are seated facing the spectator across the table. Pick up the tray and hold it as in figure 244. Note that you are looking at the tray from the same view as the spectator on your left. You lean across the table and apparently turn the tray around as you extend it to the spectator seated across from you. In apparently turning the tray around so that the spectator can view the four packets the same way that you did, you actually turn it around as shown by the sequence in figures 244, 245, 246, and 247. The X in these illustrations is included to show that the tray is not turned just 180° as it should if all were fair, but a full 360°. (Neither the X nor the row of numbers on the tray in these illustrations are actually visible; they are used merely to make the handling clear to the reader.)



Your right hand now holds the tray as indicated in figure 247. Tell the spectator seated across from you, “Counting from your left, there are packets in positions 1, 2, 3, 4. I would like you to remove the top card of the packets in positions 1 and 3.”

It appears that the first spectator (the one seated at your left) removes the top card of the packets at even positions, and that the second spectator (the one seated across from you) removes the top card of the packets at odd positions. But in fact the two spectators remove cards from the top of the *same* two packets.

“Now,” you say, “you’ll have a chance to see why I was so impressed. Would you (turning to the spectator on your left) turn over the two cards

you hold?” He does and the cards prove to be two Aces.

“And would you (turning attention to the spectator seated across from you) turn over the two cards that you hold?” He does, and they are the other two Aces.

The trick astounds laymen because it is they who cut to the four Aces.

More Proposition Bets

Here’s some more on the art of separating the mark from his money. An innocent-seeming proposition is the following. From a shuffled deck the bettor deals five face-down cards. He deals them into a row on the table and turns up any three of the five cards. The gambler bets that two of the three cards he turns up will have the same suit.

It doesn’t seem possible that the gambler would depend on something as risky as this bet, but the odds are indeed in his favor and he will walk away a winner over the long run.

A variation proposed not too long ago is to invite the mark to deal three cards from different parts of a shuffled, face-down deck. Bet him that one of the cards will be a picture card. There are only 12 picture cards in the deck. The other 40 cards are spot cards.

Clearly the odds are against the gambler since there are more than three times as many spot cards as picture cards, but as an even-money wager it’s a good bet because the odds are actually about 3:2 in your favor.

“Three-Card Poker” is a classic hustle little known outside the profession. The bettor removes an Ace, Two, and Three from the pack and mixes them face down. He takes one card face down for himself and gives the other two face-down cards to the gambler. The gambler studies the faces of the two cards given to him, then places one of these (never the Ace) face up on the table.

At this point he holds one face-down card. The bettor holds the other face-down card. The face-up card on the table is not the Ace, so it stands

to reason that the Ace could equally be held by the bettor or the gambler. Not knowing either face-down card, the bettor wages even-money that he himself holds the Ace.

After the betting, the face-down cards are turned over. If the bettor holds the Ace, he wins. Otherwise he loses.

The game seems to hold no chance whatever to tip the odds in the gambler's favor. Of the three cards in use, one is turned face up and shown not to be the Ace. It is a matter of common sense that either of the two remaining face-down cards must be the Ace, so the bet is an even-money wager.

Common sense is the chief weapon against the bettor. Whenever it seems transparently obvious that the game is tilted in his favor or is a fair even-money wager, it is a clear signal that he should get out. Appearances and common sense aside, "Three-Card Poker" is not even remotely an even-money game. The bettor will lose two out of three times, over the long run.

After the losses begin to mount in "Three-Card Poker," the gambler may offer the bettor a charitable opportunity to recoup some of his money. The game is now played so that the Ace, Two, and Three are mixed face down on the table. The bettor picks one face-down card for himself and gives the gambler the other two. As before, the gambler looks over his two cards and turns one face up.

The switch comes into play here because the gambler bets that *he* holds the Ace as his face-down card. Now it appears that the game has been turned around since it is the gambler, not the bettor, who must get the Ace to win.

It looks like a new game, but the gambler will continue to win two out of three rounds. If you're puzzled as to why — the reasoning is that, of the two cards dealt to the gambler, he can *always* turn face up a card that is not the Ace. Thus the presence of the face-up card does not alter the fact that because the gambler gets two of the three cards, he must get the Ace two out of three times in the long run.

Repeat Poker Deal

This routine is the invention of Dai Vernon. Ten cards are removed from the deck and dealt into two poker hands. The spectator finds that he has been dealt a straight. But the dealer has a full house and thus wins the round.

The cards are gathered and dealt again. Now the spectator has three of a kind, but the dealer's hand has improved. He holds four Aces and again wins the game.

Once more the cards are gathered and dealt. This time the spectator holds a full house, an excellent hand. But the performer turns up his cards and he has an unbeatable Royal Flush.

Method: The ten-card stack, face down from top to bottom, is: 10♠-A♥-A♦-K♥-K♦-A♠-J♠-K♠-Q♠-A♣. Leave these ten cards on top of the deck. When ready to present the routine, deal out the two hands face up, placing each card onto the top of the one previously dealt, in a slightly fanned condition.

After showing the dealer's full house as the winning hand, turn the hands face down in order, place the spectator's poker hand on top of yours, and again deal out two hands face up. This time he gets three of a kind, but your hand improves and you beat him with four Aces.

For the third round, turn the hands face down in order, place your hand on top of the spectator's, and again deal two hands — face down this time, for dramatic effect. The spectator will get a full house, Aces over Kings, but you beat him decisively with a Royal Flush.

According to Hoyle

This is a poker deal with a difference. The magician, with suitable humility, offers to re-create a famous card game in which a gambler, suspected of cheating, displayed otherworldly skill in winning the hand.

A five-handed game of stud poker commences. A face-down card is dealt to each of the five players. Then a face-up card is dealt to each player.

One of the players, suspecting trickery, demands that his face-up card be exchanged with the dealer's. The dealer has no choice but to comply. (Here, any player exchanges his face-up card with the dealer's face-up card.)

After the exchange, another round of face-up cards is dealt, so that now each player has two face-up cards and one face-down hole card. One of the other players, claiming that he saw a card come off the bottom, insists that his two face-up cards be exchanged with the dealer's two face-up cards. Sensing a hostile atmosphere, the dealer again has to comply (at this point, a player exchanges his two face-up cards for the dealer's two face-up cards.)

A third round of cards is dealt out face-up, and yet another player cries foul. The *three* face-up cards held by this player are exchanged with the dealer's three face-up cards.

The fourth and final round of face-up cards is dealt. The dealer appears hopeful that no one saw anything, but just then another player accuses him of palming a card and other deeds too disgusting to recount here. There is no alternative but to exchange the *four* face-up cards held by this player with the four face-up cards held by the dealer.

Each hand is then examined. Despite insurmountable obstacles, the dealer has won anyway.

Method: A setup guarantees that the dealer will win. The rest is a matter of using acting ability to infuse the routine with dramatic appeal. Face down from top to bottom the stack is: 8♥-9♦-4♥-8♣-K♥-4♣-K♣-6♣-7♥-4♦-6♦-7♠-2♥-5♥-9♣-K♦-J♠-3♥-A♥-10♠-Q♠-5♠-K♠-Q♥-2♦.

As in traditional stud poker, the first round of cards is dealt out face down to each of the five players (dealer included). Thereafter, each round is dealt face up. Each player is allowed one exchange with the dealer, an exchange of all of the face-up cards dealt to him for all of the face-up cards in the performer's hand. It doesn't matter which player exchanges

cards on each round as long as it is a different player on each round and as long as each player exchanges his cards once. The setup is such that despite the repeated exchanges, the winning hand is delivered to the dealer at the end of the game.

How to Deal a Royal Flush

It is fitting that the final routine in this chapter should be this one because it is one of the strongest gambling routines you can perform with an ordinary deck and no sleight of hand. It is the invention of Joseph K. Schmidt — the artist-magician who did the illustrations for this book — and quite a feat it is.

Five hands of poker are dealt. A random card, say the third card in the third hand, is chosen. The balance of the hand is shown to consist of worthless cards. All other hands are shown to be average.

The hands are gathered, placed on top of the deck, and five hands dealt out again. To demonstrate his ability at card control, the dealer turns over the third card in the third hand and it proves to be the card originally in that exact position in the hand.

This appears impressive enough, but then comes the kicker: Although the chosen card hasn't changed position, the other cards in the third hand have — and the player holding these cards now has a Royal Flush!

Method and Presentation: Joseph Schmidt developed the routine from Bob Fisher's "Subconscious Poker" in a magicians' magazine called *The Sphinx.* The only preparation consists of secretly getting a Royal Flush to the top of the deck. Skilled card handlers can do this by a variety of manipulative means, but advanced card manipulation is not the subject of this book, nor is it necessary to this trick. Just arrange to have a Royal Flush on top of the deck before you start.

To perform the routine, spread the deck face down on the table. Push out five cards at random (but avoid picking one of the top five cards). Say to the audience, "Some people try picking out good poker hands at random, like this." Turn over the five cards you pushed out. Chances are the hand

will be average. Say, “It’s difficult to get a good hand if you don’t know how to control the deck.”

Square up the hand and drop it face down at the top end of the spread deck. Then push out five more random cards (again avoiding the Royal Flush), saying, “If the average person tried long enough he might get a fair hand at draw poker.” Gather the five new cards you pushed out, turn them face up, and show the five cards to the audience. Again the chances are that the hand will be average.

Square up this hand and drop it face down on top of the deck as before. Then square up the complete pack. By this bit of byplay you have accomplished several things: First, you have drawn cards at random and apparently mixed the deck in the process. Second, you have focused attention on how hard it is to get a good poker hand by ordinary means. Third, you have added ten random cards to the top of the deck so that these ten cards now lie on top of your Royal Flush.

“Let me show you how gamblers control one card.” Deal out five hands face down, dealing from left to right, a card at a time, in the conventional manner. When you’ve finished the deal, say: “We can use any hand. This one will do.” Pick up the third hand. Turn it face up and show the audience that it is an average hand.

Turn the hand face down. Remove the third card in the hand (that is, the middle card of the third hand), show it around, and replace it back in the middle of the hand. The card may be the Q♥. Say: “The Queen is the third card in this worthless hand. I’ll show you how to control this one card.”

Note that you’ve said nothing yet about dealing a Royal Flush. As far as the audience is concerned, you are going to control only the Q♥. Return the third hand face down to its original position. Then gather the hands from left to right, putting each hand face down on top of the next. Place the combined packet of 25 cards back on top of the deck.

“Using nothing more than fancy footwork, a dazzling bottom deal, and a deck switch, I’ll show you how to control the Queen of Hearts.” Deal out five hands of cards again.

“Remember that the Queen was the middle card in the third hand when we started.” Pause for dramatic effect. “It still is.” Turn up the third card

in the third hand and show that the Q♥ has remained in place in spite of all that dealing.

"The bottom deal and the deck switch weren't used to control the Queen. They were used to put the Queen in better company." Turn up the other four cards in the hand, one at a time and *slowly,* to show that the hand now contains a Royal Flush.

Concluding Notes

Readers will note that poker deals or poker demonstrations in this chapter use stacked decks. This in turn reflects a fact of life in most private crooked games: the dealer (or mechanic) will allow a few honest rounds to be played; then he will switch in a stacked deck. The stack serves two purposes: it gives the mark a good hand, and it gives the dealer a better hand. The mark is encouraged to bet large sums, and thus loses heavily on what he thinks is a sure thing.

Deck switching requires misdirection and sleight of hand. Sleight of hand is not the subject of this book, but misdirection is, and we can use it to switch decks. If you were going to give a gambling demonstration, the general plan is this. Start with a stacked deck routine like Allan Slaight's "Build Down." Follow it with the "Ten-Card Deal." Then gather the cards and place all cards in the left hand. Now tell your audience that you'd like to show them a dice swindle.

Both hands go into the pockets. The right hand comes out with three dice. The left hand leaves its deck behind and comes out with another stacked deck, one set up for the Schmidt demonstration, "How to Deal a Royal Flush." Place the deck aside. Perform the "A Dice Proposition." Follow it with "Decoy Dice," using six cards from the middle of the deck so you won't disturb the Royal Flush on top. Then finish with the Schmidt routine.

You've thus performed five routines, and you've switched decks in the process. By extension, you can switch decks again and again if you alternate poker demonstrations with dice tricks. After each trick you have an excuse to go to the pockets for apparatus, and it is then that the switch

occurs. Just be sure to end with a strong routine and you will always walk off to an enthusiastic round of applause.

The walkaway line is from Malcolm X: “My first lesson in gambling was that if you see somebody winning all the time, he isn’t gambling; he’s cheating.”

10

Ultimate Impossibilities

In approaching this last chapter it must be understood that the business of magic is the presentation of the impossible. If you live in or near a big city where magicians are intensely concerned with the pursuit of their art, then you should accept the idea that on a visit to a magic shop on the average day you will see at least ten new impossible things. It is further disconcerting to see and hear magicians talk shop because they exchange miraculous feats with one another as casually as sports fans discuss baseball.

If you have learned one thing from the preceding pages, it is that the art of magic, like any art, lies in the concealment of art. It is true that every trick has a "secret," but the secret only tells you how the trick is done and satisfies a superficial curiosity. At least as important is how to do the trick, how to impart it with an air of mystery. It is the atmosphere of drama surrounding tricks and illusions that imparts them with breathtaking, even miraculous, qualities.

Since this chapter is the last in the book, it has but one goal, and that is to whet your appetite for more knowledge on the subject of magic, to encourage you to explore even further the rich lore of this unique and fascinating subject. The mysteries in this chapter will be described but not explained. They represent a sample of some of the most astounding magic in the history of the art by some of its greatest masters. Preconceived notions of how it's really done, the popular theories of wires, threads, trap doors, and mirrors, are inadequate when applied to illusions of this staggering nature.

Magicians of ancient times performed feats which were only superficially documented. Thus, Apollonius of Tyana was said to have the

power to cause whole groups of people to disappear on command. When he walked, the ground beneath him trembled and shook. When tied to a stake, Apollonius freed himself by vanishing into thin air. lamblichus had the apparent ability to walk on air — not to float in the air, but to *walk* as casually as earthbound mortals strolled the streets. A sixteenth century conjuror named Scotto would sit at a table, take a small piece of bread, and transform it into a gold coin.

Isaac Fawkes could bury a few apple seeds in a small amount of earth, and then cause an apple tree to grow, blossom, and bear fruit in 60 seconds. A seventeenth century Bengalese magician performed a feat where a pit was dug in the earth and then the pit filled with water. On command the water would freeze into a solid block of ice and then the ice vanished, leaving a dry pit. Another trick: Arrows were shot into the air; as fast as they shot up, they hung in the air, suspended by nothingness, until commanded to fall back to the ground. Even this was nothing compared to the feat of throwing a chain into the air, causing it to remain suspended, and then directing a panther, a lion, and a tiger to climb the chain. When the animals reached the top, they vanished.

Clearly the writers who described these wonders must be treated with a degree of skepticism. Possibly they described what they thought they saw, possibly they got their information secondhand, possibly they embroidered their descriptions to attract the eye of the reading audience.

As one moves up to the nineteenth century, however, the chronicles are more carefully kept. What is described here is what is known to be true. For example, J. N. Hofzinser, a contemporary of Robert-Houdin, performed a feat where a spectator was asked to stand, slip a ring off his finger, and hold the ring behind his back. Hofzinser would then have a card chosen, signed, and returned to the deck. The card would then vanish from the deck. It was found, rolled into a tube, *inside* the ring held by the spectator.

Chung Ling Soo performed a trick using a fishing rod with a line fixed to the end. Waving the fishing line in the air, Chung caught *live* goldfish from the air and placed them in a goldfish bowl. The trick stopped when the goldfish bowl became filled to overflowing with live goldfish.

de Kolta's Inventions

Bautier de Kolta invented illusions that defied rational explanation. One of two world-famous illusions that he developed was the "Expanding Die." Walking onstage carrying a satchel, de Kolta said that the satchel contained his wife. It was, he said, a convenient way of transporting her about. Opening the satchel, he removed a die measuring about six inches on a side. The die was placed on a table. Visibly, the die grew in size until it was a cube measuring about two-and-a-half feet on a side. The cube was lifted to reveal his wife.

An astounding illusion was de Kolta's "Vanishing Girl." A plain metal bridge chair was placed in the center of the stage. A few sheets of newspaper or a cloth sheet were spread out under the chair to dispel the idea of trap doors.

The magician's assistant was seated in the chair and covered with a cloth. The magician carried on a brief conversation with the assistant, whose voice could still be heard through the sheet. Suddenly the sheet was whisked away to reveal that the girl had vanished.

Since the illusion was (and is) performed at the center of the stage without fancy props, and in a strong light, there appears to be no answer as to how the girl vanished. It is the ultimate in tricks of its kind and a stunning effect to behold.

Egyptian Hall Mysteries

London's Egyptian Hall was the scene of many new and clever mysteries. One of the most talked about was the invention of Thomas Tobin, performed by Colonel Stodare, entitled "The Sphinx." A small chest was placed on a table. The front of the chest was opened to reveal a human head. To avoid suspicion of ventriloquism, Stodare retired to one side of the stage. The human head then came to life and began to talk.

There is no question that the head was human. A reporter for the *London Times* called it "one of the most extraordinary illusions ever presented to

the public," and to see it performed is to believe that the reporter was probably right. One further note: after the Sphinx spoke for several minutes, the box was closed and Colonel Stodare brought it to the "run down" near the audience, where spectators could hear the voice of the Sphinx emanating from inside the box.

Other variations of the illusion, with names like "She" and "The Decapitated Princess," were developed, but none created the sensation of the original Sphinx illusion.

John Maskelyne and George Cook opened in Egyptian Hall in 1873. Their magical wonders were so popular that the run was to extend 30 years. "Metamorphosis," a famous trick associated with Maskelyne (and at one time the subject of an interesting lawsuit) was one where a man would be placed in a box or trunk, the trunk securely locked, wrapped in a canvas bag, the canvas bag tied, and the knots sealed. In seconds the man would disappear from the box and reappear at the *back* of the theatre, strolling casually down the aisle. The most common theory among laymen as to how this type of trick is done is that twins are used, one being placed in the box, the other stationed at the back of the theatre. It has a charming simplicity about it, but the theory bears no relation to how the illusion is actually performed.

In Maskelyne's "Levitation Extraordinary" he would stand at the front of the stage and then slowly rise to the top of the domed ceiling above the audience. While thus suspended in space he would turn over lengthwise, then drift back to the stage.

Another Maskelyne trick, "Will, the Witch, and the Watchman," involved characters in a miniature play who vanished and changed places continually and in a completely mysterious fashion. The illusion proved so popular that it was performed over 10,000 times in a four-decade period.

Maskelyne's later partner was David Devant, possibly Great Britain's most admired magician. One of his illusions was "The Chocolate Soldier," in which an assistant was hoisted to the top of a platform where he marched to military music. The column was lit front and back with red, white, and blue lights. A flag was placed in front of the soldier and then

dropped out of the way. The soldier still strutted on top of the platform in time to the music but now he had shrunk to the size of a doll.

Howard Thurston

Successor to Harry Kellar, Howard Thurston developed new illusions with amazing facility. In one featured illusion, a girl was seated at a piano and began to play a tune. Thurston fired a pistol into the air. The music stopped and both the girl and the piano were gone. In another illusion a car and its passengers utterly vanished.

Illusions like these sound incredible in print. How, given any means, can a car vanish? In “The Levitation of the Princess Karnac,” one of Thurston’s greatest illusions, he caused a girl to rise and float in the air. Again, threads, wires, and magnets are marshaled to the fore as an explanation, but to see this beautiful levitation performed is to realize that such explanations are inadequate in the extreme.

The Bullet Catch

Not all of the wonders in the magician’s bag of tricks are harmless. Some are dangerous to perform, and some can be lethal. A dangerous trick is one like the following. The magician is bound and placed in a small wooden trunk. The trunk is locked. In a few seconds the magician frees himself and is out of the trunk. When the trunk is opened, two fully grown lions leap out. If you’ve seen this type of trick performed, you know that the sudden appearance of live animals, especially of the size and ferocity of lions, tigers, and panthers, comes as a considerable shock.

The element of danger in this type of trick is apparent in the number of times performers have sustained injury when one of the big cats delivers a casual blow. Tricks involving fire, the use of sharp knives, razors, explosives, acids, and “death-defying feats” like the underwater escape from locked containers, have obvious built-in risks. Sometimes even a relatively harmless trick has a way of becoming dangerous. A stock item in the magician’s repertoire is known as “The Blindfold Drive.” While

completely blindfolded, the magician gets behind the wheel of a car and successfully navigates it along city streets, threading in and out of traffic with perfect control. Not too long ago a magician performed the trick, but when he reached the appointed destination he did not stop. For reasons still unclear he kept going, crashed through a barricade, plummeted down the side of a hill, and ended up in the ocean.

Far and away the most dangerous trick a magician can perform is the one known as “The Bullet Catch.” There are many variations, including one based on the “game” of Russian roulette, but in the usual presentation an ordinary high-powered rifle is brought to the scene of the performance by a sharpshooter. The local chief of police brings a box of bullets. The police officer marks the shell casing and slug of one bullet and this bullet is loaded into the rifle.

The sharpshooter then takes careful aim on the magician, and on the magician’s command, pulls the trigger. The magician catches the bullet *with his teeth.* The impact is usually so great that the magician is knocked over backwards as a result.

At the finish, the rifle, shell casing, and the slug may be examined to prove no tampering. In fact there is no tampering whatsoever, but there is a trick to it and the reader is cautioned not to try this trick, or even contemplate trying it unless and until he is coached in the method of performing it. The result would otherwise be certain death.

Over the years “The Bullet Catch” has proven a guaranteed publicity-getter and perhaps for this reason a number of magicians have used it. Some have died, fatally wounded by the bullet they were endeavoring to catch. At such close range, if the bullet strikes the chest, death is almost instantaneous.

The trick is dangerous even if carried off successfully when the magician is using a rifle and live ammunition while onstage in the confines of a theatre. L. Vosburgh Lyons relates the story of using the trick in a theatre in Maine. To illustrate that real bullets were actually used, Lyons held up a china plate and had the marksman shoot a bullet at the plate. The plate shattered, of course, but the slug ricocheted, arced through the air, and landed in the lap of a spectator seated at the back of the

theatre! If the slug's momentum had not been spent, the spectator might have been wounded or killed.

Chung Ling Soo, a famous magician of his day, performed the trick regularly. On one occasion, while playing to a full house in a London theatre, he presented his version of "Defying the Bullets." He held a china plate in front of his chest as a target. Two of his assistants stood across the stage and took aim at the target. There was a drumroll and on signal the assistants fired.

Chung was thrown back. Staggering to the floor, he said, "Oh my God, I've been shot." He died, and an inquest followed; later a firearms expert was able to prove that a malfunction in the gun was responsible for Chung's death.

If you see "The Bullet Catch" performed, undoubtedly you will be aware of the magician's apprehension during the course of the trick. His apprehension is not feigned. The reason is that because of the absence of gimmicks, he is actually facing a sharpshooter who holds a rifle loaded with live ammunition and who is about to take direct aim at the magician and pull the trigger. The trick can go wrong even with every detail accounted for, so the magician, even as you or I, has every reason to be apprehensive.

Selbit's Mile a Minute

P. T. Selbit was the inventor of many stage illusions and probably stands alone as a creative force in this area of magic. Almost without exception, if a stage magician today uses illusions, the illusions are likely to be variations of Selbit's creations.

One of his most startling tricks was the following. A metal prison cell about the size of a phone booth, mounted on wheels, was towed to stage center by an assistant on a motorcycle. A girl was placed in the cell and the cell door locked. Then the motorcycle was started up and with a roar it drove up a ramp into an onstage garage. Instantly the garage fell open to reveal the girl. The motorcycle and the prison cell had vanished. Apart from the problem of causing such large objects to vanish, was the

appearance of the motorcycle. As quickly as the motorcycle had vanished, it simultaneously appeared *outside* the theatre in the street.

Le Roy and De Biere

Servais Le Roy was an accomplished stage magician and inventor. One of his most impressive illusions involved a double vanish. Called “The Flying Visit,” Le Roy curled up in a small box and closed a drape at the front of the box. Immediately the drape was lifted and Le Roy’s wife stepped out. Le Roy had vanished. “Where are you?” she called out. Le Roy answered, “Up here,” and appeared from a small box mounted high above the stage. He stepped into the elevated box and immediately vanished again, this time to appear at the back of the theatre, strolling down the aisle.

The illusion could be explained if Le Roy had a twin brother, but he didn’t, and the explanation is actually more ingenious than one might suppose.

Arnold De Biere was one of Le Roy’s best customers. One of De Biere’s stage illusions resembles the Le Roy trick just described. A large nest of boxes was suspended above the stage by a rope. A girl was shot from a cannon, flew invisibly through the air, and appeared inside the innermost box of the nest of boxes.

De Biere’s most astonishing trick is rarely seen today although it is a baffling mystery indeed. De Biere stood at stage center. A male assistant was at his side. De Biere flourished a large silk foulard that was given to him by the assistant. When the cloth was snapped away, a girl was seen perched on the assistant’s outstretched arm. No props, no boxes, no mirrors; just the startling appearance of a girl from nowhere.

Horace Goldin

P. T. Selbit was the inventor of the illusion where the magician saws through a human being. Horace Goldin invented a version of the trick

where a human being was sawed in two and it is the Goldin version that more closely resembles contemporary variations of the illusion.

As something of an aside it might be mentioned that the “Sawing Through” illusion still excites a great deal of speculation as to how it’s *really* done. Although in most modern versions the girl is placed in a slender wooden box and the sawing commenced with a large handsaw, this is not the only way the trick can be done. Some magicians do not use the wooden box; the girl simply lies on a long table and the sawing commences directly. Also, a handsaw need not be used; in dramatic presentations of the trick an electric buzzsaw is used.

Goldin was one of the first to present an illusion where a woman walks through a sheet of glass. In another version of this trick, incidentally, a woman standing behind a large sheet of transparent glass is made to gradually vanish. It is a strange visual illusion.

Once, the apparatus for a number of Goldin’s larger illusions, including “Walking through Glass,” “Vanishing Tiger,” and “The Floating Piano,” were lost in a ship accident off the Hawaiian Islands. But by the time he arrived in San Francisco, Goldin had devised a new and quite novel illusion.

At the time, the art of film (or moving pictures) was still something of a curiosity. Although popular with the masses, it was shunned or ignored by others who thought it had nothing to do with true art (the criticism is still heard). Yet there was no denying that film produced an odd, all-encompassing illusion of its own, the illusion that the people on the screen were indeed real, the action real, the atmosphere real. Goldin’s “Film to Life” exploited film in a strange way. He arranged to have a moving picture projected onto an onstage screen. Then he began talking with a woman in the moving picture. He then entered the picture and escorted her out onto the stage!

In another version, a woman in the film would read the minds of the people in the theatre audience. The concept itself had something of the supernatural entwined with it, because of the deliberate interlocking of illusion and reality. Was the lady in the film alive in the sense that spectators in the theatre were alive? Could she simply leave the film and

step out onto the stage at will, thus quite literally stepping from illusion to reality?

Another of Goldin's odd but eye-catching illusions, later to become a stock sequence in filmed cartoons, was called "The Phantom Hands." A piano was brought onstage. A pair of black gloves was placed on the keyboard. On command a pair of invisible hands slipped into the gloves and the disembodied hands began playing the piano. To demonstrate that it was not some mechanical device like a player piano at work, Goldin had people in the audience name popular songs; the mysterious gloved hands played any song called for.

Maurice Raymond

Magicians like Carter, Dante, Nicola, and Raymond are little remembered outside the history of show business, yet they were world travelers who played to packed houses for years. One of Raymond's most commented-upon illusions was his presentation of Le Roy's invention, the astonishing "Asrah." Raymond's assistant was hypnotized and covered with a white sheet. Then Raymond caused her to float into the air and hang suspended ten feet in the air. A hoop was passed over the floating body to prove the absence of wires.

On Raymond's command the body then floated higher and higher. Raymond reached up, grasped a corner of the sheet and snapped it away to reveal that the floating woman had vanished in midair.

"Asrah" is still a popular illusion, and when presented today still brings the same gasp of astonishment from audiences. Even granting the ability to cause a woman to float in midair, how is it possible to cause her to suddenly vanish while elevated 10 feet above the stage?

Harry Houdini,

The legendary Houdini was born Erik Weiz in Budapest on March 24, 1874. When he was still a child the family moved to Appleton, Wisconsin. As a youngster, Erik (or Ehrich) took an interest in circus stunts. When he

entered his teens he read Robert-Houdin's captivating Memoirs and immediately came under the spell of the great French magician's life. At the age of seventeen he added an i to the end of *Houdin* and began calling himself "Houdini."

As Harry Houdini he and his brother Theo played the then-popular dime museums, and in 1893 traveled to Chicago to work the World's Fair. He married Wilhelmina Beatrice Rahner — his beloved Bess — and they developed an act that combined magic, illusions, and an escape trick that was a variation of Maskelyne's "Metamorphosis."

The act played circuses and tent shows, expanding to include magic, mind reading, Punch and Judy, plus small illusions. Money was hard to come by in the early days, so Houdini earned a few extra dollars selling soap, shoelaces, combs, and the like.

He had already been experimenting with escapes from various kinds of handcuffs when he visited a mental institution in New Brunswick, Canada, and saw attendants strap a patient into a straitjacket. Shocked and awed by the sight, Houdini nevertheless obtained an ordinary straitjacket and analyzed its construction and application in an attempt to develop a method of freeing himself from this grim means of restraint.

The escape from a straitjacket was eventually perfected. Its dramatic impact on audiences proved every bit as effective as Houdini had previously guessed it would be. The sight of a man buckled and strapped into the hideous leather and canvas restraint was in itself enough to spark audience interest. The fact of Houdini's dramatic escape from the straitjacket brought terrific applause.

Houdini's big break came from Martin Beck, the booker for the Orpheum circuit. Having seen Houdini perform and aware of the audience's heightened interest in the escape tricks used in the act, Beck asked Houdini if he'd be willing to accept a challenge — could he escape from any pair of handcuffs? Houdini replied that he could escape from any manacles in existence. Beck tested Houdini's claim with a pair of manacles he himself supplied. When Houdini successfully released himself from the manacles, Beck persuaded him to drop some of the magic from his act and work as an "escapologist."

By any standard Houdini's escape work was immensely impressive. Once, locked in five pairs of shackles and a pair of leg irons supplied by the police, he quickly freed himself. Another time detectives locked him in a dozen pairs of handcuffs and tied him with a leather belt used to control dangerous prisoners. Houdini stepped behind a door, escaped from the restraints, and stepped out again. The Kansas City police bound his hands and feet in six pairs of irons and locked him in a cell. He escaped in eight minutes.

He escaped from an escape-proof cell on wheels used by the Russians to transport political prisoners to Siberia. In London, a Birmingham mechanic who had spent five years perfecting a set of locks with nine pin tumblers in each cuff clamped the cuffs on Houdini's wrists. Houdini stepped behind a small screen. An audience of 4,000 sat in complete silence as Houdini tried for an hour and a half to escape from the cuffs. He finally emerged from behind the screen perspiring, his shirt and jacket torn, having freed himself from the cuffs. Pandemonium raged through the large theatre and Houdini was carried off by members of the audience.

In 1906 he escaped from the "Murderers' Row" cell in Washington, D.C., once used to hold the assassin of President Garfield. Not only did he escape, but he opened the doors to all the other cells in the cellblock, told the prisoners to change places, then relocked the doors to their cells. This sensational feat received tremendous newspaper coverage.

Houdini's success was staggering. He played the Palladium for $3,700 a week; in today's money that figure would translate into a small fortune. His name was synonymous with escape work, so much so that his name entered the dictionary. In an age lacking the exposure that today is available through radio and television, he was the subject of tremendous publicity throughout the world, achieving almost day-to-day continuous press coverage for a period of nearly a quarter of a century. In contemporary times, when a "superstar" may achieve transient glitter and stardom for a period of a few years, Houdini's achievement, in retrospect, seems unbelievable.

It has been said that if Houdini had lived past the 1930s (he died in 1926), his escape act would not have been as well received. By then audiences were used to continuous action as presented on movie screens

and heard over the radio. But Houdini, the master showman, was aware of this, and before the tragic end of his career he had already begun to shift his attention to other areas of popular entertainment. When the magazine Scientific American offered $2,500 to any medium who could produce psychic phenomena under rigid test conditions, the Boston medium Margery responded to the challenge. After being investigated, she was pronounced genuinely psychic and therefore eligible to claim the prize.

But Houdini stepped in and proved Margery a fraud. He gave lectures on a nationwide tour in which he denounced fake spiritualists. Later he exposed another psychic sensation, Rahman Bey.

Before his death, Houdini became involved in films (playing leading roles in *Haldane of the Secret Service, The Man from Beyond,* and *Terror Island*) and pioneered in certain aspects of the then-fledgling aviation industry. There seems to be no reason to doubt that if he had lived, Houdini would have gone on reaping columns of publicity as one of the most colorful personalities of his era.

I have saved one Houdini trick for the closing paragraphs because it is undoubtedly one of the most incredible feats performed on any stage.

A committee of about twelve spectators were invited onstage and positioned at the back of the stage in a row. They could thus see everything going on from a more or less backstage position. Because they were so close to Houdini, they could also detect immediately any sign of fraud or trickery.

Houdini stepped to the front of the stage. A large sheet was placed on the floor of the stage proper to immediately dispel any idea that a trap door might figure into the illusion about to be performed.

While Houdini explained to the audience what was about to transpire, two assistants wheeled out a long, narrow platform set almost level with the stage.

While the audience watched, the men then built a brick wall, brick by brick, cementing each brick carefully into place. It might be said that there was no trickery; the two men simply built an ordinary brick wall. But in any case the audience and the onstage committee were there to watch every move.

When the wall had been constructed, Houdini had two simple screens brought out. They looked roughly like pressboard telephone booths, but were smaller in size, and certainly smaller than the height of the wall. One booth was placed on the left side of the brick wall and the other booth was placed on the right side of the wall.

The amazing illusion now commenced. Audience attention was riveted on Houdini. He stepped into the booth on the left side of the wall. One second later he stepped out of the booth on the right side of the wall. He had walked through a solid brick wall!

Review the self-imposed conditions. There was a cloth sheet on the stage to make it impossible for him to crawl under the wall. The committee at the back of the stage made it impossible for him to walk around behind the wall. There was no way he could climb over the wall. All right then, Houdini walked directly through the wall. *But how does a man walk through a solid brick wall?*

John Scarne

The outstanding authority on all phases of gambling, John Scarne is also considered the world's greatest showman with a deck of cards. He has entertained and baffled audiences consisting of as few as one or two people to as many as 70,000, using nothing more than a deck of cards and fabulous sleight-of-hand ability. If you see an expert like Scarne perform under ultra-closeup conditions, you will begin to understand the profound difference between this type of magic and stage magic. Too, you will begin to appreciate the impossibility of analyzing, much less understanding, the expert's secrets.

The following card effect is one of the best examples of a kind of magic that seems to transcend mortal powers of comprehension. It is Scarne's hitherto unpublished presentation of an effect with a borrowed deck, a stunning effect and an appropriate one with which to close this book.

The trick can be done in someone's home, but it is best done in an apartment because you are further from the ground (and the roof) and this

tends to squelch any idea of help from an unseen assistant lurking about outside.

A card is chosen from a borrowed, shuffled deck. Remember that the deck is borrowed and that the choice of cards is a free one. The spectator choosing the card signs his name across the face of the card so he can identify it later. He is not a confederate.

The card is returned to the deck and the deck shuffled. At this point, Scarne's comment, "I know the card already," brings a laugh from the spectators because although he hasn't touched the deck yet, he probably does know the card. He usually adds: "But I'm not going to just name it. I'd like to try something different."

Scarne takes the deck and tosses it against the living-room window. The deck hits the window, and the cards fly in all directions, ultimately fluttering to the floor. That is, all the cards end up on the floor except one.

That card is seen to have somehow become stuck to the window. Not only that, but it is the card chosen and signed by the spectator. A good trick, but it has a devastating finish.

Scarne, smiling benignly, tells the spectator to go to the window, remove the card and actually verify that it is the card he chose and signed from the borrowed deck.

The spectator goes to the window, tries to remove the card, and stops dead in his tracks, because the signed card is stuck to the *outside* of the window.